

**'THE POOR MAN'S PICTURE GALLERY':  
AN ENQUIRY INTO ARTISTS' PRINTMAKING AND PRINT IMAGES  
IN THE CULTURAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF POST-WAR BRITAIN, 1945-60**

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TWO VOLUMES: VOLUME ONE

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis argues for the value of attending to artists' printmaking in Britain between 1945 and 1960. It claims that prints provided a particular artistic space in which contemporary experiences and issues in culture and politics were readily explored and, as evidence for this, it offers developed interpretations of print images. In parallel, it proposes that an idea of prints as a way to democratise art ownership marked both printmaking and print images across the period. The first chapter explores the nature and status of post-war printmaking, in particular via the Society of London Painter-Printers exhibition of 1948. It also looks at images from the first series of Lyons Lithographs, from 1947, considering these as responses to wartime atrocity and postwar reconstruction. Artists discussed include Matthew Smith, Eileen Agar, Prunella Clough, Graham Sutherland, Edwin La Dell, Barnett Freedman and Mary Kessell. The following two chapters look at prints published to celebrate the Festival of Britain, in 1951, and the Coronation, in 1953. The Festival of Britain images are discussed as a sympathetic, though complex, visual response to the culture accompanying the development of a welfare state after 1945. The 1953 images are interpreted as revealing tensions that arose for this position when picturing the royal and military spectacle of the Coronation. Artists whose work is discussed include Lynton Lamb, Fred Uhlman, John Minton, Barbara Jones, Stella Marsden, Edward Bawden and Keith Vaughan. The final chapter examines work published by St George's Gallery Prints in the later 1950s and in particular images by Merlyn Evans, interpreted in relation to the history of modernist primitivism, and Josef Herman and George Chapman, considered in relation to themes of stasis and change in the context of Britain's evolving industrial landscape. By demonstrating the interpretive possibilities of attending to post-war prints, the thesis argues against

tendencies in art history that view much British art and printmaking after 1945 as parochial and timid. At the same time, it argues for a sophisticated approach to periodisation that recognises the specificity of the post-war period but also its links to the 1930s and its continuities with the 1960s.

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  - Since prints can be owned by multiple collections, that given is – wherever relevant – the collection viewed in the course of this research (and hence the source for the illustration image may be different). Where a paper image was not viewed, the public gallery providing the source for the electronic image is preferred. Where no such image is available, any public gallery holding the print is, if possible, referenced.
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55. John Minton, *Horse Guards in their dressing rooms at Whitehall*, published 1953, Victoria and Albert Museum. Lithograph, 42 x 30 cm. ([collections.vam.ac.uk](http://collections.vam.ac.uk)).
56. William Scott, *Busby*, published 1953, RCA Print Archive. Lithograph 46 x 33 cm. ([visualarts.britishcouncil.org](http://visualarts.britishcouncil.org)).
57. William Scott, *Orange, Black and White Composition*, 1953, Tate. Oil on canvas, 122 x 122 cm. ([tate.org.uk/art/artworks](http://tate.org.uk/art/artworks)).
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## INTRODUCTION

### *The Shot Tower from Somerset House*

Without its title, the post-war urban landscape in Claude Rogers' lithograph *The Shot Tower from Somerset House* would be hard for today's viewer to place (Figure 1). The same outlook over the Thames is now transformed, with the tree-lined frontage of the South Bank Centre at its heart and a cluster of high-rise offices around Waterloo behind. In fact, changes to the Lambeth side of the river began almost as soon as Rogers had made the print in 1948. A recognisable feature on the right of his skyline was the enormous, roof-mounted emblem of the Lion Brewery but, in a loss lamented by the nascent folk-art preservation movement, the brewery and its emblem were demolished shortly after as part of site clearance for the Festival of Britain, held in 1951 (Figure 2).<sup>1</sup> In contrast, the early nineteenth-century Shot Tower itself was retained for the Festival. In a potent metaphor of the event's core theme of a venerable nation looking to the future, this redundant industrial structure (built to shape lead shot) was repurposed to demonstrate the reception of radio signals bounced off the moon and was now dramatically surmounted by a large radio dish (Figure 3). However, this was a brief reprieve and the Shot Tower too was demolished in the subsequent clearance of Festival buildings.

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<sup>1</sup> See Margaret Lambert and Enid Marx, *English Popular Art*, London: Merlin, 1989 (first edition 1951), 14: 'Londoners will remember as a familiar landmark against the skyline the great stone lion (also eighteenth-century work and made of artificial stone) which stood on the roof of the "Red Lion Brewery" on the south bank of the Thames; it survived all the bombing unscathed only to succumb to the post-war zeal of the Festival of Britain planners'. The Brewery was built in 1836 – 37 and closed in 1931. Its site was used for the Festival Hall (Harriet Atkinson, *The Festival of Britain: A Land and its People*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012, 12).

Though planning for the South Bank site was underway in 1948, Rogers was unlikely to have been aware of these potential futures. Nonetheless, there is a premonitory nostalgia to his image, though also a hint of expectation and future promise. The early evening light softens the outlines of buildings to the back and gives warmth to the glow of streetlamps – at least for those which work. His spread of a semi-naturalistic purple unites the older, industrial architecture with the foreground roadway of the new Waterloo Bridge, a structure that had been completed only three years previously and hid modern reinforced concrete beneath its clean, Portland stone cladding. The emptiness of that roadway might hint at post-war austerity – petrol rationing continued until 1950 – but it also emphasises the human presence on the pavements. Figures are largely grouped together watching the river but this crowd is complemented by recognisable individuals: beneath the foreground streetlamp walk a couple, perhaps in uniform, while to their right a pedestrian is rather dangerously caught-up reading his newspaper. The figures' combined variety and proximity suggests the community of wartime – or at least of wartime myth – as well as the narrative of Britain's single, unified 'people' that was shortly to animate the Festival of Britain on the site across the river. The evening atmosphere of time stretched and suspended elevates this community and its everyday activity. Overall, the sense is of a picture that while, perhaps, looking somewhat ordinary to us now, offered deeper resonances to contemporaries as a low-key celebration of its place and its period.

Rogers' choice of lithography as the medium for the picture was not simply a personal, creative decision. Rather, he was one of several artists, most with reputations as painters, commissioned by the Victoria and Albert Museum's Circulation Department for its



exhibition, *150 Years of Lithography* that ran in London from October to December 1948, followed by a tour of regional venues.<sup>2</sup> The exhibition had a strong educational element, comprising historical surveys of English and French artists' lithographs prefaced by material on technology and technique.<sup>3</sup> There was even an accompanying explanatory talk on the BBC's Third Programme.<sup>4</sup> Such unembarrassed didacticism went with the grain of a wider seriousness within one strand of late 1940s culture. In this case, that spirit was mediated by the museum's Circulation Department, whose intended educational mission and broad audience had been taken to heart by its staff. Indeed, their emphasis on activities aimed at democratising access to art led to an internal reputation as being 'left-wing in sympathy', given a perceived alignment with the cultural agenda of the 1945 Labour government.<sup>5</sup>

The very choice of a print exhibition made sense in this context; as the curator Bryan Robertson subsequently recollected, "'Art for All" was in the air as a democratic principle'

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<sup>2</sup> Rogers attended the Slade from 1925 to 1928 and was a founding member of the Euston Road School in the late 1930s. He taught at Camberwell School of Art from 1945, then lectured at the Slade from 1948 until 1963, when he became professor of fine art at the University of Reading. (David Buckman, *Artists in Britain since 1945, Vol. 2, M – Z*, Bristol: Art Dictionaries, 2006, 1,368). For the exhibition see *150 Years of Lithography 1748-1948*, exhibition catalogue, Leeds City Art Gallery, 21<sup>st</sup> May – 26<sup>th</sup> June 1949 and 'Lithography Past and Present', the *Times*, 20<sup>th</sup> October 1948, 7. Each regional show comprised a subset of the works in London (for which I have not been able to locate a catalogue); the Leeds' booklet lists three commissioned prints (William Scott, *Head of a Girl*; John Aldridge, *Essex Farmyard* as well as Claude Rogers, *The Shot Tower from Somerset House*) but it seems likely that more were commissioned (for example, the *Times* references a commission from John Piper, while at *Colour-Prints by the Society of London Painter-Printers*, at the Redfern Gallery that year, a number of lithographs were shown as 'courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum' indicating further commissions (though this set excludes Rogers' print).

<sup>3</sup> This included a section on metal plates by Edwin La Dell, a tutor at the Royal College of Art and an organising force in post-war lithography. A glossary of relevant print techniques is given at Appendix 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Radio Times*, 1310, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1948, 15, <https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/schedules/third/1948-11-24>, accessed 15<sup>th</sup> November 2019. The talk comprised segments by the printer Thomas Griffiths, whose 'Colour Printing' was published by Faber and Faber the following year, and the artist John Minton (*150 Years of Lithography*, transcript, Third Programme, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1948, BBC Written Archive Centre).

<sup>5</sup> Joanna Weddell, 'Room 38A and beyond: post-war British design and the Circulation Department', *V&A Online Journal*, 4, Summer 2012, unpaginated, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/research-journal/issue-no.-4-summer-2012/room-38a-and-beyond-post-war-british-design-and-the-circulation-department/> accessed 17<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

and printmaking 'had a fine democratic appeal, with the possibility of making contemporary art available within the financial means of a new public'.<sup>6</sup>

## Argument

Over the course of this thesis, I explore evidence in support of three main lines of argument. The first is the claim that artists' printmaking in the years from 1945 to 1960 was richer and more complex than existing narratives have, in general, allowed and that it deserves and repays attention. The second is that a sympathetic and historically informed consideration of specific print images offers an insight into the politics, culture and experience of post-war Britain. Consideration of Roger's *The Shot Tower from Somerset House* has given a flavour of such insights, conveying the complex mix of nostalgia and confidence that shaped the 'people's peace', in a term coined by William Beveridge. The third line of argument has also been introduced in the discussion of Roger's image. This is that printmaking in the period was marked by an ideal of art democratisation. It was an ideal that linked post-war prints to printmaking's earlier history and that impacted how they were produced, sold and received.

These three claims do not stand separately. Thus the first, for the underappreciated richness of post-war printmaking, is reinforced by evidence for the second – that is by examples of particular print images that illuminate the period. The images examined in later chapters do not, unsurprisingly, support a strong notion that post-war prints carried a set of

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<sup>6</sup> Bryan Robertson, 'Introduction', *Out of Print: British Printmaking 1946 – 1976, with an introduction by Bryan Robertson*, exhibition catalogue, British Council, London, 1994, 9. Robertson worked at the *Studio* magazine from 1945, managed the Heffer Gallery in Cambridge from 1949, and in 1952 moved to be curator of the Whitechapel Art Gallery.

coherent meanings unique to the medium itself. Nonetheless, I argue that printmaking's association with democratisation (my third claim) positioned it to one side of the artistic mainstream and that this particular context could support the creation of images that addressed immediate, sometimes popular, concerns (in accord with my second proposition). I substantiate these connections between my main lines of argument at various points in the chapters that follow. In the paragraphs below, I expand on the issues at stake in each.

In the memories of those with first-hand experience, post-war Britain was a bleak place to attempt any kind of printmaking, a situation that lasted through to the late 1950s. Stanley Jones, a student at the Slade from 1954 to 1956, has written that 'it is difficult to imagine the parlous state of both printmaking and the market in the UK in the 1950s', while Anthony Gross, a Slade staff member, recalled an even more dire situation, a period when 'hardly an original print was published'.<sup>7</sup> As Gordon Samuel has noted, in this narrative 1945 and 1960 are simply end-markers for prints' 'so-called "barren years"'.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps reflecting this assessment, the extent of art historical scholarship addressing printmaking in Britain in the period is minimal. What literature there is does not, in fact, endorse Gross's description of a near absence of print publication, but it does stress that production occurred without the infrastructure of a commercial publishing and distribution industry or the quality

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<sup>7</sup> Stanley Jones, *Stanley Jones and the Curwen Studio*, London: Herbert Press, 2010, 7; Anthony Gross, *Etching, Engraving and Intaglio Process*, London: OUP, 1970, 11. Jones makes a similar comment in the 'Preface' to *Ceri Richards Graphics*, National Museum of Wales, 1979, 3: 'In post-war Britain the interest in original prints was virtually non-existent [sic]'. Gross is characterising the UK and the US in the quarter century following the 1929 crash.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon Samuel, 'Introduction', *British Prints of the Post-War Years 1945-60*, exhibition catalogue, Redfern Gallery, London, 21<sup>st</sup> January – 19<sup>th</sup> February 1986, 3. Samuel himself is unusual in arguing for the creativity of the period: 'a wealth of interesting and innovative work was produced'.

standards that these might encourage. Thus in the most developed description of the printmaking field in the period, Frances Carey and Antony Griffiths describe the hallmark of the 1950s as the 'hand-made, irregularly produced print' that was 'run off in erratic editions'.<sup>9</sup> Carey and Griffiths also suggest that this situation was transformed in the decade that followed, a point put succinctly by Andrea Rose in the catalogue for a British Council survey exhibition, *Out of Print: British Printmaking 1946 – 1976*. Rose describes a tale of two periods: 'from 1945-60, the years of post-war austerity, when the print publishing industry in Britain had all but disappeared; and from the 1960s onwards, the boom years, when British printmaking rapidly grew'.<sup>10</sup>

As stated, the first and primary claim developed over the chapters that follow is that, despite the tenor of most existing commentary, artists' printmaking in the fifteen years from 1945 was, in fact, rich and complex and repays an attention that it has not been given. This is not to deny the difficult realities that printmaking faced in the period and the relative dearth of publishing opportunities. The economic depression of the 1930s had extinguished a flourishing, if narrow, market (particularly for etchings) and it was only in the late 1950s that demand revived sufficiently to support new printmaking studios and publishers (this time principally in lithography and screenprinting).<sup>11</sup> However, emphasising these as years of famine, in the manner of Gross, obscures the fact that they did, in fact, support substantial printmaking activity, if more limited than in the periods that preceded and

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<sup>9</sup> Frances Carey and Antony Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking 1914 – 1960*, London: British Museum, 1990, 23.

<sup>10</sup> Andrea Rose, 'Foreword', *Out of Print*, 5.

<sup>11</sup> For the pre-Depression market see Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 9-15; for the new publishing houses of the 1960s see Jones, *Stanley Jones*, 77-111.

followed. Similarly, acknowledging the prints made but giving primary consideration to the broken infrastructure and motley production values of the time, in the manner of Carey and Griffiths, takes attention away from the print images themselves, images that can, with sympathetic attention, compel and intrigue (a point that can be made without overstated claims of aesthetic innovation or significance).

While this study is focussed on prints, I want to suggest that the argument that printmaking repays a new attention speaks to a wider issue in the historiography of post-war British art. Writing on the period has sometimes tended towards a single narrative in which an arc of change reaches, teleologically, towards a preferred end state. Martin Harrison's *Transition*, for example, marshals the story of diverse strands within 'the London art scene in the fifties', but all are fitted to an overarching template: the move from 'shabby, grey, austerity-era Britain' to 'a luminous and dynamic modernity'.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Anna Massey's history of the Independent Group characterises the immediate post-war years in terms of a conservative, insular 'welfare state culture', in need of the international avant-gardist tonic that arrived through Lawrence Alloway, Eduardo Paolozzi and their associates.<sup>13</sup> Print history is easily assimilated to a version of this same narrative. As noted, printmaking after 1945 has been described as disorganised and unprofessional, if not entirely unproductive, a

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<sup>12</sup> Martin Harrison, *Transition: The London Art Scene in the Fifties*, London: Merrel in association with Barbican Art, 2002, 11. Harrison is summarising the thoughts of the painter Richard Smith, but they serve as a motif for his own discussion (Harrison is careful to note that for some, modernity could be about picking up the threads of the 1930s, *Transitions*, 16).

<sup>13</sup> Anne Massey, *The Independent Group: Modernism and mass culture in Britain 1945-59*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995, Chapter One. See also John Russell's 1969 comment on early British Pop: 'What came out ... between 1959 and 1962 was a contribution to the idea of an England at last recovered from the lethargy of the immediate post-war period' (quoted in Robert Hewison, *Culture and Consensus: England, art and politics since 1940*, London: Methuen, 1995, 137) and work by Alex Seago and David Mellor discussed in *Chapter Three*.

preliminary to the field's fulfilment in the 1960s. Moreover, in the rare cases where its images have entered consideration, they have been characterised as limited in their concerns. For example, Julia Beaumont-Jones' recent survey *A Century of Prints in Britain* is relatively generous in its inclusion of immediate post-war work, but nonetheless utilises the idea of these prints as confined to the 'narrow scope of figurative "British scene" subjects'. They are contrasted with a moment of liberation in the late 1950s when the 'old distinctions between commercial and fine-art processes ... diminished as the inherent syntax of print became a subject in its own right'.<sup>14</sup> In this context, where the attitude to printmaking echoes a wider art-historical framing of the period, the argument that post-war prints might be reclaimed as productive objects of study thus has an additional edge, suggesting that there are gains in moving outside this frame altogether.<sup>15</sup>

Some cultural historians, reviewing the broader literature on post-war Britain, have criticised the partial impression of those years that they consider it provides. A narrow concern for high politics, it is claimed, means the texture and experience of life in these years gets lost, while the tendency is for either an uncritical celebration of shared national

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<sup>14</sup> Julia Beaumont-Jones, *A Century of Prints in Britain*, London: Hayward Publishing, 2017, 16 (Beaumont Jones' history acts as an introduction to selected prints from the Arts Council Collection; the idea of investigating the 'syntax of print' is returned to in my *Conclusion*). As a second example, Richard Riley also talks of a printmaking 'revolution' in the 1960s, implicitly casting the preceding period as dull and convention-bound (Richard Riley, 'Introduction', *As Is When: A Boom in British Printmaking 1961 – 1972*, London: British Council, 2003, 7).

<sup>15</sup> There are precedents for complicating an orthodox, modernist-influenced narrative in art history, though largely focussed on the pre-war period see, for example, David Peters Corbett, *The Modernity of English Art, 1914-30*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1997 and Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns*, London: Thames and Hudson, 2010; see also, though discussing a different context to that here, Leon Wainwright's work on the adoption of modernist tropes by post-war artists from the African diaspora in, for example, 'Frances Newton Souza and Aubrey Williams: entwined art histories at the end of empire', Simon Faulkner and Anandi Ramamurthy (eds), *Visual Culture and Decolonisation in Britain*, Adlershot: Ashgate, 2006, 101-126

purpose or, in contrast, a simplistic assertion that the period lacked expressive self-confidence.<sup>16</sup> In this context, my second overarching claim – that the interpretation of print images can illuminate aspects of post-war life – offers a potential seam of evidence that might contribute to a more rounded understanding of these fifteen years. In the main body of the study, I suggest that the meanings print images made available both reflected on and contributed to contemporary debates (for example over steel nationalisation or the status of colonial cultures) while, at the same time, their aesthetic affect could capture something of the emotional colouring and nuance that such ideas and events held for contemporaries. The interpretations that I make are not tied to any single, reductive narrative of British history after 1945. Rather, the prints considered provide evidence for the variety of post-war culture and experience. That is not to say that my historical narrative is not structured by some broad underlying interests. A repeated theme of the thesis is the way national identity was reimagined and contested amidst political tension, economic change and imperial dissolution. In particular, Chapters Two to Four trace through print images how, alongside the Labour government of 1945-51, notions of an inclusive, egalitarian and peaceable national identity were promoted and challenged, and how this subsequently persevered, adapted and faded under a resurgent conservatism and an increasingly consumerist social orientation. Previous writing on post-war British prints has rarely engaged in the interpretation of images, while wider art histories of the period have all but

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<sup>16</sup> See Becky Conekin, Frank Mort and Chris Waters (eds), *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain 1945–64*, London: Rivers Oram Press, 1999, 3-4 and Lynda Nead, *The Tiger in the Smoke: Art and Culture in Post-War Britain*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre, 2017, Introduction. Some of these criticisms seem harsh towards a body of work from political historians who have, nonetheless, addressed aspects of cultural change (from sports attendance to adult education) with acuity.

ignored prints. This aspect of the thesis is thus an experiment in giving this kind of material this type of attention.

Post-war printmaking in Britain stood at the end of a century-old tradition in which prints were promoted as the ideal agent for widening access to art and art ownership. My third claim in the thesis – that post-war printmaking was marked by an ideal of art democratisation – is thus most profitably investigated with an awareness of this tradition, of the inherited language and ideas that framed the way prints were discussed and understood and which proved to have an unexpected longevity. The remainder of this section aims, briefly, to introduce this history.

For most of the nineteenth century, a booming market in reproductive engravings (that is print copies of paintings) co-existed with disparagement of their artistic status by institutions such as the Royal Academy, on the basis that as reproductions they lacked the quality of invention.<sup>17</sup> The eventual emergence late in the century of ‘original’ printmaking – primarily etching – as a form given some validity by cultural authorities was a facet of larger changes in the artistic field. As the idea of originality began to be formulated in its characteristically modern form (in terms of the visible touch of the creative artist on the

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<sup>17</sup> Reproductive prints ranged from the six-penny sheets to expensively framed engravings, with editions rising to 30,000; by the 1880s, London supported approximately 125 printseller’s shops (Martha Tedeschi, “Where the Picture Cannot Go, the Engravings Penetrate”: Prints and the Victorian Art Market’, *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, 31:1, 2005, 10 and 17; see also Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich, ‘Introduction: the state of the field’, Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich (eds), *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London, 1850 – 1939*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2011, 10-19). The Royal Academy restricted membership to five reproductive engravers with associate status (Gordon Fyfe, *Art, Power and Modernity: English Art Institutions, 1750 – 1950*, London and New York: Leicester University Press, 2000, 17 and 34).



surface of a work) the champions of etching were able to promote its rapid execution and sketchy aesthetic as warrants for an underlying artistic inspiration.<sup>18</sup> However, as other print media also developed or re-emerged, additional issues continued to complicate printmaking's status, including the way it inserted intermediating technology between an artist and the final print impression.<sup>19</sup> By the mid-twentieth century, the form's champions were continuing to feel that its value was under appreciated or misunderstood, in particular due to a continuing association of print impressions with copies of existing artworks, as defensive assertions in the catalogue introduction for *150 Years of Lithography* witnessed: 'there is still a widespread prejudice ... based on a confused and quite mistaken idea that [lithographs] are "reproductions" and not "originals"'.<sup>20</sup> Educational efforts like the Victoria and Albert Museum's exhibition looked to put the public right, but for an artist engaged in making prints after 1945 there was a continuing ambiguity over the status of their work.

Inextricably bound up with questions of reproduction and status was the implication of printmaking for art's audience. Prints, produced as multiple impressions, offered a way to democratise art ownership through an increased supply of images and consequent low cost, bringing into the reach of many a commodity widely felt to have a value (aesthetic or moral) that exceeded its market price. A discourse of democratisation

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<sup>18</sup> Fyfe, *Art, Power and Modernity*, 121.

<sup>19</sup> For example, Walter Sickert's claim that lithographs utilising transfer paper were not 'true' lithographs provoked a libel action from Joseph Pennell, supported by James McNeill Whistler, in 1897 and opened questions of how much intermediate technical process was permissible (see Meagan Clarke, 'Seeing in Black-and-White: Incidents in Print Culture', *Art History*, 35:3, October 2011, 581 – 93).

<sup>20</sup> Peter Floud, '150 Years of Lithography', *150 Years of Lithography*, exhibition catalogue, 1. Peter Floud was Keeper of the Circulation Department at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Though specific to lithography, Floud's comments echoed those of Laurence Binyon in his preface to the first exhibition of the Society of Twelve in 1904 (Laurence Binyon, 'Preface', *The Society of Twelve*, exhibition catalogue, Obach and Co., London, 1904, unpaginated).

had certainly surrounded the nineteenth-century bull market in reproductive prints. These, it was claimed, would allow art's 'healthy influence' to be 'felt among the million', though such rhetoric could disguise the fact that the widened audience was largely middle-class.<sup>21</sup> The original print could also be recruited as an agent for democratising art ownership (though some of its early advocates preferred to emphasise exclusivity within an art field oriented to the unique, luxury object).<sup>22</sup> In the first half of the twentieth century, for example, democratisation was at the heart of Claude Flight's ambitions for the linocuts of his Grovesnor School. In *Lino-Cuts: A Handbook of Linoleum Colour Printing*, published in 1927, Flight set out his hope that prints could be sold 'at a price within the possibilities of the smallest purse' and the cheapness of linocut seemed to make this plausible.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, while many contemporary prints were aimed at the collector's portfolio, Flight was clear that he intended linocuts as decoration for the home. Despite some initial promise, however, this vision was not to prove a popular or commercial success beyond the mid-1930s.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Quotations are from the *Art Union Journal*, 1847, referenced in Tedeschi, "'Where the Picture Cannot Go'", 10; see also Joy Sperling, "'Art, Cheap and Good: The Art Union in England and the United States, 1840–60'", *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, 1:1, Spring 2002, <http://19thc-artworldwide.org/index.php/spring02/196--qart-cheap-and-goodq-the-art-union-in-england-and-the-united-states-184060>, accessed 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019. A lack of specificity in the use of 'middle class' in some art historical literature can obscure who benefited from moves towards democratisation; it is worth emphasising, for example, that the widened middle-class print audience identified by Tedeschi ("'Where the Picture Cannot Go'", 16–17) is a very different constituency to the wealthy patrons described by Dianne Sachko Macleod (*Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>22</sup> Seymour Haden, the leading advocate of etching in the late-nineteenth century, emphasised a connoisseurial, collectors market, while practices of limiting, numbering and signing editions became standard practice at this time (see Fyfe, *Art, Power and Modernity*, 132 and Julie F Codell, 'Artist's Professional Societies: Production, Consumption and Aesthetic', Brian Allen (ed.) *Towards a Modern Art World*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre, 1995, 174). A tension between restricting and celebrating multiplication runs through the history of prints.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Hana Leaper, "'Old-fashioned modern": Claude Flight's Lino-Cuts and Public Taste in the Interwar Period', *Modernist Cultures*, 11:3, 2016 (special issue, Rod Rosenquist and Alice Wood (ed.) *Modernism in Public*), 390.

<sup>24</sup> Leaper convincingly argues that Flight failed to match his product to his intended audience, proselytising for a modernist-inspired style that had limited popular appeal. A link from the Grovesnor School to post-war printmaking was provided by Rex Nan Kivell, managing director of the Redfern Gallery, who had been one of the school's principal promoters and who continued to retail prints after 1945.

These efforts at democratisation inevitably rested on assumptions about the value of widened art ownership. A rhetoric of moral improvement frequently accompanied nineteenth-century reproductive prints, with narrative images that conveyed appropriate lessons to their audience (of patriotism, piety or sobriety) providing a simple vector for their uplifting influence.<sup>25</sup> Such an argument for democratising art based on the specific moral force of the stories told could not survive the demise of the Victorian narrative picture itself. Nonetheless, a belief that democratising art could have a more diffuse moral impact did not disappear. Flight's promotion of cheap original prints in the Grovesnor School's characteristic contemporary style, for example, came from his faith in the redeeming powers of modernism. Modernist styles alone, he believed, offered an adequate aesthetic response to modern life and could discover its beauty, but the ordinary population was alienated from it: the democracy of the linocut would heal this divide.<sup>26</sup>

The immediate antecedent of activity to democratise art through prints after 1945 lay not with Flight and the linocut, however, but in the efforts of the Artists' International Association (AIA) and others who promoted large-edition lithography as a popular medium in the late 1930s and I return to this connection to in *Chapters One*. The years after 1945 were also to see the democratising tradition within printmaking achieve a particular prominence, on the back of its congruence with the aims of the newly elected Labour

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<sup>25</sup> Tedeschi, "Where the Picture Cannot Go", 10-12. Painting was itself influenced by an understanding of the print market as infused with moral purpose, with painters producing suitable, easily read images that could be transferred to engraving or mezzotint.

<sup>26</sup> Leaper, "Old-fashioned modern", 392.

government and its construction of a welfare state that extended opportunities in education and culture, as well as health and financial security. The Dartington Hall *Arts Enquiry*, for example, commissioned to inform government arts policy and published in 1946, cited the pre-war activities of the AIA, including its production of large-edition, low-cost prints, as a model for integrating visual art with the public.<sup>27</sup> This context gave artists' printmaking as a whole unusual salience, though at the cost of binding it to the idea of an affordable, democratising art form (as the quotation from Bryan Robertson in the preceding section illustrates). Indeed, the period covered by this study marked a high-point for practical initiatives to broaden art ownership through prints, though it also included attempts to reposition them within the fine-art mainstream by those fearful that popular associations undermined the form's artistic status. The post-war history of the idea of prints as a democratising form (and its tension with other conceptions) is one that weaves in and out of the foreground of this study, with explicit discussion concentrated in sections of *Chapter One* and *Four*. Nonetheless, it is also an implicit presence throughout, helping to define how prints as a class were understood and hence the meanings available from each individual image considered.

This history of prints and democratisation in the period is not, however, a neat one.

As I document in *Chapter One*, the ideal of democratisation in these years can be hard to

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<sup>27</sup> Lynda Morris and Robert Radford, *AIA: The story of the Artists International Association 1933-1953*, Oxford: MoMA Oxford, 1983, 75; Robert Radford, *Art for a Purpose: the Artists' International Association, 1933-1953*, Winchester: Winchester School of Art Press, 1987, 166, n.1. The Arts Enquiry was funded by the private charity, the Dartington Hall Trust, as a survey of the arts in wartime and potential futures; launched in 1941, its specialist committees continued for six years with the first book-length study, *The Visual Arts* published in 1946 (see Anna Rosser Upchurch, "'Missing' from policy history: the Dartington Hall Arts Enquiry, 1941-1947", *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 19:5, DOI: [10.1080/10286632.2012.724065](https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2012.724065), accessed 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020).

disentangle from an associated but distinct discourse of ‘pictures for the poor’, the latter a marketing pitch that gave democratising rhetoric a strange, parallel existence, devoid of political content. Moreover, it lacks any clear resolution. The aspiration to use prints to democratise art was inherited, most immediately from the 1930s, and it was then passed on – with some achievements but by no means fulfilled – to a new context in the 1960s which added its own complexities, as I elaborate further in the *Conclusion*.

Even among those to whom democratisation remained a political conviction after the war, its underlying purpose – the value that art offered to a wider audience – was largely left unarticulated. Studies of the democratising tradition in British art have tended to take a critical stance towards its motives and effects, Frances Borzello, for instance, condemning Victorian initiatives to take paintings to working-class Londoners, and interpret the moral lessons of their narratives, as a ‘misuse of art’.<sup>28</sup> Scholars addressing developments after 1945 have claimed that the principal new body administering state patronage, the Arts Council, swiftly focussed its attention on prestige institutions at the expense of reaching out to wider audiences, let alone extending conceptions of culture or promoting popular participation. As Alan Sinfield has put it, the “‘high” culture to which everyone was now to have access was almost the same as that which had previously identified a class fraction’; this was, he asserts, the cultural element of ‘welfare-capitalism’, a policy programme which cemented the authority of upper-middle class taste in the arts while offering a nod towards

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<sup>28</sup> Frances Borzello, *Civilising Caliban: The Misuse of Art 1875 – 1980*, London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987. The sub-titles wording implies a surprisingly essentialised view of art: that its use in certain disapproved functions is somehow improper to its nature, a ‘misuse’. Borzello’s study centres on the efforts of the Rev. Samuel Barnett in the East End, culminating in the opening of the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1901.

wider public access in return<sup>29</sup>. There was some alignment between post-war advocacy for prints as a route to democratise art and the ideology of the Arts Council, as ascribed to it by subsequent critics: new print buyers would be, by definition, consumers, and the pictures which they could now purchase were squarely within traditions of 'high art'. Nonetheless, the self-organising efforts of printmakers, often working at the professional margins (or even those of a company such as J. Lyons and Co. Ltd, discussed in *Chapter One*) make poor villains compared to a state institution (or Borzello's Victorian moralisers). In my discussion of prints and democratisation I do not try to unmask hidden, ideological interests on the part of democratisers. Rather, I take their motivation to have been straightforward, if largely unstated: a belief in the value of art – as beautiful or insightful – and that an egalitarian politics demanded that this was shared widely.

## Structure

The main chapters of this study present events and images in a broadly chronological order. *Chapter One* thus includes a discussion of particular prints made at the beginning of the period, in the later 1940s. However, this chapter also differs somewhat from those that follow – and does some of the groundwork for them – in the extent to which it focuses on the institutional framework that surrounded and supported printmaking and influenced how prints were understood, and in addressing these issues it extends its coverage to the mid-1950s. This material is important for my argument against the idea that these were simply

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<sup>29</sup> Alan Sinfield, *Literature, politics and culture*, London: Continuum, 2004, 57. See also Becky Conekin, *'The Autobiography of a Nation': The 1951 Festival of Britain*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003, 48-57 and 212-15.

printmaking's 'barren years'. Indeed, it cites frequent references to a print renaissance in contemporary commentary, though it also acknowledges that such sanguine assessments related almost exclusively to colour lithography and offers an account of the rise of this medium. The material also provides evidence for how the ideal of democratisation shaped post-war printmaking. Previous writing on post-war lithography, in particular, has tended to draw a distinction between its promotion as a prestige, limited-edition form and the parallel production of cheap, large-editions with a democratising intent. In *Chapter One*, I consider the audience for both forms and suggest that this contrast, though real, was less evident at the time, with the primary audience for both forms an extended middle class that would struggle to afford paintings.

Those democratising activities that occurred in the late 1940s can be readily associated with a strain of earnestness or 'moral austerity' that has been identified by historians of these years.<sup>30</sup> Peter Hennessy, for example, gives the rhythmic description of the immediate post-war moment as one of 'plain living/ high thinking'.<sup>31</sup> Varied examples buttress the claim that an aspiration for higher cultural and moral standards, combined with political idealism, affected some people within all classes of British society. Evidence in the visual arts comes from the 350,000 people who visited the van Gogh exhibition at the Tate in the winter of 1948–49, the culmination of a series of high exhibition attendances, while in

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<sup>30</sup> Hewison, *Culture and Consensus*, 115.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Hennessy, *Never Again: Britain 1945-51*, London: Penguin, 2006, 309 (he adds the caveat that this is a 'partly (but only partly) mythological memory' of those years). See also Paul Addison, *Now the War is Over: a social history of Britain 1945 – 51*, London: Faber, 2012 (first published 1985), 133–34 and 201–03; though, in contrast, David Kynaston concentrates on popular antipathy to the discourse of cultural improvement (*A World to Build*, London: Bloomsbury, 2008, 175–76).

politics a shared earnestness and idealism can be seen as part of the cement for the coalition which brought Labour electoral victory in 1945.<sup>32</sup> This mood formed the context for the first series of Lyons Lithographs, published in 1947. *Chapter One* also looks in detail at selected images from this series (such as Edwin La Dell's *Hastings*, Figure 21), suggesting that, despite first appearances, they offered reflections on living in the aftermath of the war and all that it had exposed. These interpretations offer initial evidence for a proposal that reappears across the following chapters: that the meanings made available by post-war print images suggest that printmaking offered a particular artistic space – to one side of the mainstream and inflected by the form's popular, democratising associations – in which current issues and the experience of living in post-war Britain were readily explored. As noted earlier, my argument that post-war prints can offer insight into the wider culture and my claim that printmaking was marked by a democratising intent are thus connected.

Close looking at specific print images, in order to illuminate aspects of post-war Britain, is continued and comes to the fore in *Chapter Two* and *Chapter Three*. In particular, these chapters investigate tensions, changes and continuities in the cultural politics of the early 1950s through the lens of two series of lithographs. In a way that was still redolent of the socially-engaged spirit of the late 1940s, each of these series was published to celebrate a public occasion: the first alongside the Festival of Britain, the second for the Coronation

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<sup>32</sup> For museum attendance see Addison, *Now the War is Over*, 136. Further evidence of widespread interest in culture includes record numbers of book publications and sales of the BBC's high-minded magazine *The Listener* peaking at 150,000 in 1949 (Hennessy, *Having It*, 102). In 1945 Labour reduced the Conservatives to 38% of the 'middle-middle class' vote (Mike Savage, *Identities and Social Change in Britain Since 1940: The politics of method*, Oxford. Oxford University Press, 2010, 75). By 1963, Michael Sissons and Peter French could already write of how the idealistic, apparently unified atmosphere of the post-war years seemed 'incredibly remote' (Michael Sissons and Peter French, 'Introduction', Michael Sissons and Peter French, *The Age of Austerity*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1963, 9).



two years later. Both series were thus tied to specific, government-sponsored events, and events which attempted to articulate a vision of the British nation and its values back to itself. My contention in these two chapters, in accord with my wider argument that print images offer insight into the post-war experience, is that the contrasting visions of national identity that were promoted at the Festival and Coronation were echoed, contested and complicated through the images of the associated lithograph series.<sup>33</sup>

The first of these events, and the subject of *Chapter Two*, was the Festival of Britain, held over the summer of 1951, between the Labour party's second election victory in February 1950 and its narrow defeat in October the following year. While it represented Labour's most overt cultural intervention, in large part it extended policies and attitudes that had been manifested since 1945. From the outset, Clement Attlee's administration had promoted popular access to 'the great heritage of culture in this nation' and aimed to go beyond 'material security' to facilitate the 'evolution of a people ... more rich in culture'.<sup>34</sup> The Royal Charter creating the Arts Council of Great Britain came into force in 1946, initiating government patronage of contemporary art, and Labour trebled its budget.<sup>35</sup> The Council's early focus, however, was on performance and the metropolitan companies in music, opera and ballet; its largest impact on visual art was to come through the Festival,

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<sup>33</sup> Such a linkage was unusual, but not unique in relation to either of these events: in addition to art commissioned for the Festival by the Arts Council, artists were employed to commemorate the Coronation by the Ministry of Works.

<sup>34</sup> From *Let us Face the Future* (1945) and *Labour Believes in Britain* (1949) respectively, quoted in Borzello, *Civilising Caliban*, 129 and Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation*, 48.

<sup>35</sup> Hewison, *Culture and Consensus*, 29-35. The organisation had its origins in wartime consensus: its predecessor, the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA), was established in 1940 and the decision to perpetuate and formalise such a body was made by the short-lived Conservative government that followed the dissolution of the wartime coalition.

where it commissioned multiple works for the South Bank site and organised accompanying exhibitions.

The cultural policy of the immediate post-war years, however, pleased critics on neither the right nor left. Emblematic amongst the former was T.S. Eliot whose damnation of the times was absolute: 'We can assert with some confidence that our own period is one of decline, that the standards of culture are lower than they were fifty years ago'.<sup>36</sup> At the root of this decline, he believed, was the welfare state, both because its emphasis on planning was anathema to an organic society and because its aspiration for equality threatened a levelling down when high-art depended on a social elite. For Eliot, cultural democratisation threatened culture's destruction and the trends apparent in 1948 made it reasonable to foresee a coming time 'of which it is possible to say that it will have *no* culture'.<sup>37</sup> From those nominally on the left, the terms of criticism were not markedly different. Writing privately in 1947, the influential art writer and organiser Herbert Read, lamented that England was 'completely finished because now based on assumptions which deprive social life of incentive. ... I begin to think that the Americans are right to keep to a capitalist economy until a better alternative than state socialism becomes evident.'<sup>38</sup> A more reflective (and public) response came from J.B. Priestley in his pamphlet *The Arts under Socialism*, though here again the spectre of artistic mediocrity as a consequence of

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<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Hewison, *Culture and Consensus*, 51. See also David Pryce-Jones, 'Towards the Cocktail Party: The conservatism of post-war writing', Sissons and French, *The Age of Austerity*. Eliot's already weighty cultural authority gained further ballast with the award of both the Order of Merit and the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1948, without compromising his reputation as a modernist.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Massey, *The Independent Group*, 20.

social reform stalked the pages: 'The artist wonders rather dubiously about the Socialist atmosphere of co-operation, committees and commonsense; asks himself how he will like it when splendid wealthy patrons are replaced by earnest and dreary town councillors'.<sup>39</sup>

In *Chapter Two*, I argue that, in contrast to such criticism, the lithograph series published by the Artists' International Association (AIA) alongside the Festival of Britain was, in key respects, sympathetically aligned with the event's official narratives and, through them, to the policies and actions of the government. In part, this is about the democratising intent behind the format of their publication (and I counter claims that 1951 marked the expiry of such democratising aspirations for prints). However, it also emerges from an interpretation of selected images. Prints in the series such as those by Julian Trevelyan and Edwin La Dell (Figures 28 and 29) affirmed the notion of an egalitarian, unified British 'national family' that was promoted by the Festival, their images giving it emotional depth. At the same time, by offering pictures of contemporary Britain, other images in the series also complicated such conceptions of the nation, revealing specific aspects of the deep political and cultural divisions that marked the years from 1945 and that lay beneath the Festival's claims for familial tolerance.

I conclude the chapter by proposing that, in as much as there is a shared quality among the prints in the AIA series, it can be usefully captured through a redefined notion of welfare state culture. As noted in the preceding section, the term originates with Anne

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<sup>39</sup> J.B. Priestley, *The Arts Under Socialism*, London: Turnstile Press, 1947, 9. Note that I have not amended or marked the use of male pronouns as universals in quotations here, or elsewhere in the thesis.

Massey, as a pejorative used to characterise much of the art of the time, and at the Festival in particular, as nostalgic, parochial and dull. I suggest, in contrast, that the phrase can instead be used as a way to refer to those works that entered a constructive, creative, but also potentially complex, relationship with the centre-left politics of the Attlee government. My rationale in choosing to adopt – and adapt – the label from Massey is twofold. In part, by taking Massey’s term but switching its valence, I am straightforwardly emphasising that I am offering an alternative to the dominant way of framing the period and its art. More substantively, I am also attempting to create a conceptual tool that can help give such work the sympathetic and historically informed attention that will open its interpretative possibilities – an attention that I aim to give it in this study. My approach is rooted in observing the disjunction between, on the one hand, the interest from political and cultural historians in the period when Britain’s welfare state was established and, on the other, the lack of focus on this moment’s visual expression within art history. A non-dismissive use of a concept of welfare state culture has the potential to direct thinking about post-war art towards this important context and how it was mediated through images.

In *Chapter Three*, I turn attention to the series of lithographs produced to celebrate the Coronation by the Royal College of Art (RCA). J.B. Priestley’s friendly concern for the arts under socialism had proved to be otiose when Labour lost office to the Conservatives in late 1951, initiating thirteen years of Conservative government. The Festival turned out to mark the end of Labour’s tenure, while the death of George VI in 1952 provided the incoming government with an early opportunity to mark a new course through the subsequent Coronation, held in June the following year. These two neighbouring events – Festival and

Coronation – have been widely used by diverse historians as co-ordinates from which to explore the contrasting social and cultural trajectories on either side.<sup>40</sup> At the Festival, the arts were enlisted in an enterprise aiming to consolidate a revised vision of the nation as peaceable, home-loving, proud of its provinces, and united by familial ties of solidarity; the whole event was anathema to cultural conservatives. In contrast, the Coronation celebrations enacted a return to the more outward-facing, assertive and imperial narrative of the inter-war years, despite the reality of imperial decline. At the Coronation's heart was a view of the state as centralised and immutable, though at its margin were other, newer themes of choice and consumerism; its message was of a future where the majestic, hierarchical authority of state and reassuring tradition could successfully co-exist with market freedom and plenty.<sup>41</sup>

Though published by the RCA, the series had strong links to the earlier Festival prints in terms of its organisation and personnel, a fact that raises the question at the core of this chapter: how could an initiative with such roots adapt to the changed environment of the Coronation? Through reflection on images in the series portraying ceremonial soldiers (such as Figure 52) and invoking ideas of popular art (Figure 43), I argue that the prints from 1953 – though themselves disparate and complex – demonstrate significant continuity in ideas, attitudes and feelings with those of 1951, and that this complicates the idea of a clear-

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<sup>40</sup> Becky Conekin, "'Here is the Modern World Itself': The Festival of Britain's Representations of the Future', Becky Conekin, Frank Mort and Chris Waters (eds), *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain 1945 – 1964*, London: Rivers Oram Press, 1999, 246 (see also the 'Introduction' to the same volume); Hennessy, *Having It So Good*, 244-45; Hewison, *Culture and Consensus*, 64-7.

<sup>41</sup> Epitomised by London's Electrolux showroom displaying consumer goods topped by a regal crown (Frank Mort, *Capital affairs: London and the making of the permissive society*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010, 26-28 and 40).

cut cultural pivot from Festival to Coronation. The final section of the chapter considers the prints as examples of the dominant aesthetic and values of the RCA in the early 1950s, as these have been described by Alex Seago.<sup>42</sup> In concluding, I suggest that these characteristics of the RCA can be understood as a further manifestation of welfare state culture, indicating how this persisted beyond Labour's fall in 1951. Somewhat against the tenor of Seago's own judgements, the Coronation prints thus offer further evidence of the interest and complexity of visual art that was produced within it.

As noted, the Coronation saw evidence of a nascent consumer society.<sup>43</sup> Twenty months earlier, the Conservative election campaign had already sought to cast Labour as a party of collectivist restriction, of 'queuetopia', and itself as the champion of 'freedom and abundance', of ladders of opportunity.<sup>44</sup> In the years that followed, many considered this promise to have been delivered. Rising real incomes combined with new products and deregulation to suggest new possibilities for individual consumers, and the Conservatives were rewarded with increased majorities in 1955 and 1959.<sup>45</sup> Such social change provides the context for my exploration of St Georges Gallery Prints and its publications in *Chapter Four*. The chapter begins by looking at the operations of the gallery itself, after its opening

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<sup>42</sup> Alex Seago, *Burning the Box of Beautiful Things: the Development of a Postmodern Sensibility*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

<sup>43</sup> Consumerism was not of itself an innovation: for a wide component of the middle-class, the appearance of consumer goods marked a return to the pre-war situation as much as a novelty (see Kenneth O Morgan, *The People's Peace: British History 1945 – 1990*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, 77). However, the 1950s introduced new products and advertising media, and a wider range of classes were able to afford the new goods, bringing consumer values into the heart of British culture.

<sup>44</sup> *Britain Strong and Free*, London: Conservative and Unionist Central Office, 1951, unpaginated, <http://www.conservativemanifesto.com/1951/1951-conservative-manifesto.shtml>, accessed 10<sup>th</sup> October 2019; Kynaston, *Family Britain*, 33.

<sup>45</sup> For wages growth see Morgan, *The People's Peace*, 124; for youth marketing, *ibid.*, 96; and for innovations in retailing, Hennessey, *Having it So Good*, 18.

in 1954, tracing how the issues explored in *Chapter One* developed during the latter part of the 1950s. The gallery's emphasis on production standards and marketing are readily understood as part of wider trends in consumption and illustrate a new professionalism in the printmaking field. However, I note that the gallery still struggled to overcome perceptions of prints as 'pictures for the poor', despite attempts to shift prints into the mainstream of fine-art retailing, while it was uncertain in its own relationship to the tenacious ideal of democratisation, passing this as a live issue to its successors in the following decade.

The publications of St Georges Gallery Prints did not mark the end of colour lithography's position as the dominant print form, but they did broaden the base of print techniques familiar to the purchasing public. In looking at selected images produced by the gallery in the body of *Chapter Four*, I focus on works in some of these other media: sugar-lift aquatints by Merlyn Evans and etchings by George Chapman, as well as one further lithograph by Josef Herman. In a sign of other changes in the printmaking field, I suggest that these images are more obviously aligned with concerns found in painting than had tended to be the case with earlier post-war prints. However, I also argue that these concerns in large part looked back to those of earlier decades, as much as forward to the next. Hence, while the gallery has been discussed primarily as a precursor to a following 'print boom', such a teleological history continues to obscure matters.

St George's Gallery Prints stressed prints as a mainstream, fine-art form and this inevitably had an impact on the meanings that they carried (in particular given my earlier

suggestion that post-war prints' engagement with contemporary events can be related, if loosely, to their positioning at the edge of the wider art field). Nonetheless, I argue in *Chapter Four* that prints continued to offer distinctive meanings – even if these might now be achieved precisely through the contrast of a specific image with the forms' popular association (as I suggest was the case for Evans' aquatints (Figure 64). Unsurprisingly, given the increasingly extended period of Conservative government and the social and political changes sketched above, the idea of welfare state culture is less applicable to the pictures discussed in this chapter. Nonetheless, I trace a continuing influence of late 1940s thought and specifically the way a rhetoric of colonial partnership, pursued by some in the Attlee government, provides a context for Evans' prints of the late 1950s. The art and of the mood of the Festival also continued to resonate, with Herman's early 1960s lithograph referencing his own work in 1951 (Figure 78). In contrast, I interpret Chapman's images as centred on social change, showing a very particular world – the coalmining towns and villages of the Rhondda – exposed to the rapid development of a consumer society.

In looking at the images of both Evans and Chapman, I suggest there were important contrasts with the way similar themes were handled in the art of the following years. In concluding the thesis, I turn briefly to the prints of the 1960s themselves, but more particularly to some of the new ideas that emerged or matured in that decade, both in relation to the nature of printmaking and to art democratisation. I argue that an uncritical reception of these ideas has continued to influence writing on prints, and that this has obscured the qualities of the immediately preceding period. By returning a sympathetic and historically informed attention to post-war prints, themselves often created within a



democratising conception of the form, it is possible to see how they illuminate a period of social democratic reconstruction, conservative reaction and intense political and cultural debate.

### Coverage

The title of this thesis refers to 'artists' prints', but what counts as an artists' print has both shifted over time and been contested at any given moment. In post-war Britain, debate was framed primarily in terms of originality; that is around how an artists' print could be distinguished from a reproduction through the artist's tactile or intellectual involvement (and this debate is rehearsed in Appendix 3). However, this might lead to a further question about who counted as an artist. Attempts to establish the status of printmaking after 1945 often levered the prestige of those with reputations as painters or sculptors but who also made prints. At the same time, others successfully carved out careers as print specialists.<sup>46</sup> The contemporary concept of the artist and artists' print seems to have been flexible enough to accept such diversity (and the division between general artist and print specialist did not map on to the distinction between limited and large editions, with artists from both categories engaged in both forms). The subsequent historiography of British twentieth-century prints is, for the most part, equally catholic. Frances Carey and Antony Griffiths are a partial exception in their concentration on 'avant-garde' printmaking, asserting that this category was dominated by artists whose primary reputations were in painting or

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<sup>46</sup> Barnett Freedman and Lynton Lamb, for example (discussed in Chapters One and Two respectively), fall within this category. Print specialists typically also took commercial and illustrative commissions. These forms are touched on only in passing in this thesis, but to keep a manageable scope, rather than to maintain some in principle distinction.

sculpture.<sup>47</sup> The danger in such an approach is that prints become positioned simply as an appendage to an existing art-historical story – that of the triumph of modernism.<sup>48</sup>

In this study I take a holistic approach, considering work by active printmakers who were published and exhibited in the period, whether they were print specialists or artists with a wider reputation. Although it might be expected that printmaking would be relatively accessible to women – facing barriers to exhibiting in other, higher status media – this does not seem to have been the case for published prints.<sup>49</sup> Nonetheless, women did take part in the exhibitions and series that I describe and works by Mary Kessell, Barbara Jones and Stella Marsden are discussed in detail. Throughout the thesis, my intention has been to avoid using prints solely to add footnotes to existing writing on modern British art and work by a number of canonical artists is ignored or touched on only lightly. Thus, I do not address Henry Moore's collotypes or Graham Sutherland's prints with the Parisian atelier of Mourlot. Nor has my aim been to construct a comprehensive survey, and hence some centres of activity and individuals are treated peremptorily. I say nothing substantive about

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<sup>47</sup> Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 7. The claim is honoured in the breach: both Grovesnor School members and S.W. Hayter are treated in depth despite being primarily printmakers. Carey and Griffiths also elide the large editions with the work of specialists by covering both in their introduction (itself intended to complement their main 'avant-garde' focus). This is misleading, however; for example, the catalogue for the second series of Lyons' large-edition prints notes the interest expressed by professional painters (Philip James, 'Foreword', *Lithographs by Contemporary Artists/ First and Second Series/ Published by J. Lyons and Co. Ltd*, exhibition catalogue, Arts Council Gallery, London, 2nd August – 1st September 1951, 3, V&A Archive, ACGB/121/621).

<sup>48</sup> Riva Castelman's introductory survey of international printmaking takes just this approach and inadvertently raises the question of why she finds the topic worth her attention at all (Riva Castleman, *Prints of the Twentieth Century*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1976).

<sup>49</sup> Three women (out of a total of thirty-two artists) contributed to the three series of Lyons Lithographs, two women (out of eighteen artists) to the AIA's Festival of Britain series, and four women (out of thirty-four artists) to the Coronation series. Of the seventy printmakers participating in St George's Gallery Prints' first *The Graven Image* exhibition in 1959, eleven were women.

printmaking at St Ives or the Bath Academy of Art at Corsham Court, nor do I discuss images by S.W. Hayter.<sup>50</sup>

The printmaking activities I consider instead (the first Society of London Painter-Printers exhibition, publications by Lyons, the AIA and the RCA, and the opening of St George's Gallery Prints) can, though, be claimed as central to developments in the printmaking field. They also form something of a coherent – if loose – whole, largely through the presence of linking individuals such as Edwin La Dell (who acted both as an organiser and a participating artist at various points). As importantly, however, for my own purposes, these were also activities that emphasised prints' connection to contemporary social, political and cultural issues. This was overt with the two series marking the Festival of Britain and the Coronation, but it was also an aspect of the democratising intent of the Lyons publications and the later attempt to modernise retailing at St George's Gallery Prints. My initial interest in post-war printmaking, and my hunch that its images merited attention, was motivated in part by their context, by a sympathy for the aspirations and predicaments of the Attlee government and an interest in how its ideas waned in the 1950s. The nature of my interest thus directed my attention to these particular printmaking activities. It has also influenced the specific images created within these activities that I examined in detail. The prints discussed in the following chapters are those where close-looking suggested connections to these wider historical themes. The selection is therefore partial and, to an

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<sup>50</sup> For St Ives and Corsham Court see Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, chapter 8; Robin Garton (ed.) *British Printmakers 1855 – 1955*, Devizes: Garton and Co with Scholar Press, 1992, chapter 9. For Hayter and his influence see Duncan Scott, 'Hayter's Legacy in England', the *Tamarind Papers*, 14, 1991-92, 57-69.

extent at least, swayed towards artists where an existing literature offered a starting point for further research.<sup>51</sup> However, where I generalise about a series or printmaking more generally this is done with an awareness of the wider set of images, not by ignoring counter-examples (for instance, with the AIA lithographs, my claim for an alignment with Festival themes is not contradicted by prints I leave without detailed discussion).

In the later 1950s the Scottish Committee of the Arts Council encouraged Scottish artists to produce lithographs to be printed by Harley Brothers in Edinburgh.<sup>52</sup> These are not works I consider in detail and, as a specifically Scottish activity, their absence focusses attention on the use of 'British' to frame my thesis. The chapters that follow discuss work by a number of artists originating from or resident in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, as well as images whose subject was assertively non-English. Nonetheless, this material was largely published and primarily exhibited in London, giving an Anglo-centric (indeed a London-centric) aspect to my coverage.<sup>53</sup> As Stefan Collini has pointed out, however, Britishness was the dominant (if never exclusive) term through which people across the wider United Kingdom understood their national identity at this time, while key institutions of politics and the arts had the same geographic scope.<sup>54</sup> Despite the somewhat partial

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<sup>51</sup> Hence in relation to the *Coronation Lithographs*, for example, I write about John Minton and Keith Vaughan, two of the series' best-known contributors.

<sup>52</sup> See Chris Allan, *Artists at Harley's: Pioneering Printmaking in the 1950s*, exhibition catalogue, Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow, 2000.

<sup>53</sup> For example, William Scott was born in Northern Ireland while Leonard Rosoman remained based in Edinburgh; George Chapman's *The Rhondda Suite* takes a Welsh subject, James Sellars' *Sheffield Steel* one from Yorkshire. My focus on the printmaking field in London is partially determined by the availability of commentary from London-based newspapers. It is arguable, however, that London was, in reality, the centre of most printmaking at this time given limited printmaking facilities and a retail context focussed on the capital.

<sup>54</sup> Collini, *Absent Minds*, 10: 'For all kinds of intellectual, practical and political purposes, "Britain" was the defining entity during this period: the British government made the laws and the British people fought the wars; the British navy ruled the waves just as the British Broadcasting Corporation ruled the airwaves. ... And

coverage, writing in terms of Britain and of British printmaking, thus respects historical usage and also refers to the social and political unit most relevant for making historically-informed interpretations of print images and their relationship with the formation of national identity.

Alongside questions arising from Britain's internal diversity, contemporary scholars have asserted the centrality of empire and the process of decolonisation to understanding Britain, and its visual culture, after the war.<sup>55</sup> In this view, the idea of an art history bounded by Britain's national borders (rather than including the state's colonial entanglements) is a political fiction. In the course of this thesis, the historical experience of late imperialism and decolonisation, from the British perspective, is seen as a presence in print images by John Minton and Merlyn Evans. More broadly, colonial relationships were central to the national self-fashioning of both the Festival of Britain and the Coronation and hence form part of the context for the lithograph series discussed in *Chapters Two and Three*. However, in writing about these images and events, I am influenced by Kristin Blumel's observation (congruent with Collini, cited above) that Britain, as a concept, gained in salience amongst its domestic citizens precisely because of its vulnerability – it was at this time a chosen, not an arbitrary, self-identifier.<sup>56</sup> Thus, a recognition that post-war British culture was intrinsically embroiled in a continuing imperial history does not mean that it was exclusively so: some contemporary prints may be parochial in their concerns but nonetheless as such they offer an understanding of domestic British concerns, disputes and experiences.

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the inescapable fact is that insofar as there was during this period a shared public culture among the constituent elements of Great Britain ... it was overwhelmingly English in its sources, idioms, and concerns'.

<sup>55</sup> See Tim Barringer, Geoff Quilley and Douglas Fordham (eds), *Art and the British Empire*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009 and Faulkner and Ramamurthy, *Visual Culture and Decolonisation in Britain*.

<sup>56</sup> Blumel, 'Introduction', Blumel (ed.), *Intermodernism*, 6-7.

The distinctive characteristics of printmaking in the fifteen years from 1945 (the fashion for colour lithography, the democratising initiatives) might reasonably justify demarcation of the period adopted here.<sup>57</sup> However, my linkage of printmaking to the wider fields of art, culture and politics raises the question as to how far a common periodisation is appropriate. In relation to British social and political history, Peter Hennessey has identified the same fifteen years as ‘the short post-war’, a span distinctive enough for separate treatment.<sup>58</sup> The end of the Second World War and the election of the first majority Labour government make 1945 an apparently natural opening marker. The end point is less obviously aligned with any domestic or international event but Hennessey argues that 1960 was, nevertheless, a year in which the national conversation changed decisively. There was a new pace to decolonisation, an economic turn towards Europe, and an acceleration of cultural liberalisation; while the years from 1945 had been neither static nor monolithic, they had had a degree of social and political commonality that retreated after 1960. Other historians have coalesced on the same periodisation, with some slight variations in the end date, premised on the idea of capturing a distinctive post-war moment.<sup>59</sup> Within art history, Margaret Garlake also uses 1960 as the end date for her coverage of post-war British art in

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<sup>57</sup> The limited literature on British mid-twentieth-century prints has used a similar periodisation. Carey and Griffiths claim validity for the same end date in their survey of ‘avant-garde’ printmaking, though covering a longer span (*Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 23). Samuel chose the same start and end dates for his 1986 exhibition, *British Prints of the Post-War Years 1945-60*, though he subsequently used a slightly later date and a longer span (*A Radical View: Avant-Garde British Printmaking 1914-1964*, exhibition catalogue, Osborne Samuel Gallery, London, 9<sup>th</sup> May – 4<sup>th</sup> June 2016).

<sup>58</sup> Peter Hennessey, *Having it So Good: Britain in the Fifties*, London: Penguin, 2007, 2 and 620.

<sup>59</sup> Robert Hewison uses the same division in *In Anger: Culture in the Cold War 1945-60*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1981. David Kynaston uses MacMillan’s succession for an earlier end date (*Family Britain 1951-57*, London: Bloomsbury, 2009, Volume 2 of *Tales of a New Jerusalem, 1945-57*) while Conekin, Mort and Waters (*Moments of Modernity*) use the year following his departure. Stephan Collini introduces an idea of ‘the long 1950s’ dipping into the preceding decade and ending with the ‘cultural phenomenon known as “the sixties”’ in 1962-63 (*Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 138).

*New Art, New World*, though treating this with some flexibility. Garlake too perceives a qualitative difference between the society that ‘set out to create the New Jerusalem’ after 1945 and the Britain of the 1960s, seeing this cleavage reflected in the social history of British visual art.<sup>60</sup>

Such broad alignment between periodisations proposed within print, art and socio-political history suggest that what is distinctive in post-war printmaking arose, in part at least, from what is distinctive about post-war society, mediated by wider artistic activity. The conception of print history as bound to wider historical developments underlies the chronological ordering of the chapters that follow, but this ordering is not, though, intended to imply a single, linear narrative to the period. Lynda Nead has asserted the value in opening out our assumptions about post-war history – as a uniform progress through a neatly bounded era – in order to attend to its complex pattern, the period being better thought of as a ‘series of unevenly overlapping durations’.<sup>61</sup> This is useful, casting the era from 1945 to 1960 as a fuzzy historical entity with internal diversity and boundaries that are real but not absolute.

With this point in mind, neither the start nor finish date used in this study is treated prescriptively. For example, St George’s Gallery Prints, the subject of *Chapter Four*,

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<sup>60</sup> Margaret Garlake, *New Art, New World: British Art in Postwar Society*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre, 1998, 9 (this remains the principal survey text focussed on post-war Britain). Much of the literature on British art in the 1960s, however, has annexed some portion of the later 1950s (usually from 1956) to a notion of the long 1960s (David Mellor, *The Sixties Art Scene in London*, London: Phaidon in association with the Barbican Art Gallery, 1993; Chris Stephens and Katherine Stout, *Art & the 60s/ This Was Tomorrow*, London: Tate Publishing, 2004). This risks ignoring elements of the earlier decade which cannot be cast as precursors of the latter.

<sup>61</sup> Nead, *The Tiger in the Smoke*, 9.

continued to operate until 1963 – on the far side of my upper bound – but is best considered as a whole. The apparent naturalness of 1945 as a starting point is reinforced by the existing narratives of print history. Bryan Robertson, for example, who was a participant in events, suggested retrospectively that 1945 was ‘a sort of *tabula rasa* as far as printmaking and the collecting of prints were concerned’.<sup>62</sup> However, the idea of an absolute break with the past obscures much about the post-war situation for prints and in the wider world. One alternative approach to periodisation is suggested by the concept of the ‘intermodern’ within cultural history. In Kristen Bluemel’s formulation, this encompasses ‘1930s Depression, 1940s war and 1950s reconstruction’ as a continuous and bounded unit.<sup>63</sup> Bluemel identifies a distinctive category of cultural (principally literary) products that were a feature across these decades and that were characterised by a combination of non-canonical status, radical politics and an interest in the lower-middle and working class. Suggestively, these were features shared by at least some mid-century printmaking. This too existed to one side of the canonical form of painting and could display a politically-based interest in widening the audience for art. In *Chapters One and Two* I develop this hint and propose that a similar historical perspective can be productively applied to printmaking and specifically the pre-war origins of post-war initiatives in colour lithography. Such a perspective does not invalidate my principal focus on the post-war years as a distinctive (and relatively understudied) era for British prints. However, it does help in drawing attention to a continuity of interests and institutional linkages that stretched from the 1930s to the 1950s, in particular connecting democratisation narratives across these decades.

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<sup>62</sup> Robertson, ‘Introduction’ in *Out of Print*, 9.

<sup>63</sup> Kristin Bluemel, ‘Introduction’, Kristin Bluemel (ed.), *Intermodernism*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009, 14.



The terms ‘modern’ and ‘modernism’ are used at various points in the following chapters. The former is employed relatively loosely: ‘modern art’ appears in contemporary quotations, as well as in my own writing, to refer to a broad set of visual styles that emphasised scale, colour and loose handling. Modernism is used more narrowly to refer to a self-conscious (if diverse) project of using innovative techniques in art in the belief that these alone were adequate responses to the perceived conditions and fractured cultural authority of modern life. This can be traced to the early twentieth century and through a subsequent evolutionary history (hence I note continuing stylistic influences of an older, Bloomsbury modernism, in *Chapter One*, and trace in detail Merlyn Evans’ response to earlier modernist primitivism, in *Chapter Four*). In the second half of the century, modernist thinking continued to diversify (Pop Art, for example, emphasising mass media as constitutive of modern experience) while modernism also became dominant in cultural institutions and the discourse of scholarship and curation. It is in relation to this history that I reference modernism as a current of thought contributing to the marginalisation of other approaches in twentieth-century art, including much post-war printmaking.

## **Method**

The subjects of study in this thesis fall into two distinct types, and the methodological approaches taken – and their theoretical underpinnings – are flexible, adapted to each. The first of these categories is covered by Margaret Garlake’s useful term, ‘the art support system’: that is, the institutional network comprising dealers, patrons, art schools, journals,

critics and so on that is a precondition for artistic practice.<sup>64</sup> Features of the system are given specific attention in *Chapter One* (which makes particular use of journalistic sources) and the opening section of *Chapter Four*. This material provides a new angle on the print history of the period, contributing to my revisionist claim that these were not simply fallow years. It also frames the accompanying interpretation of individual print images, providing an understanding of how the medium itself was experienced and understood.

My account of the 'print support system' delivers a history of art in its narrower sense; that is, the knowledge gained relates specifically to the field of art, its production and consumption. Moreover, in taking a primarily descriptive approach to the support system, the relevant sections of this thesis are open to criticism as 'positivistic and untheorised' in a way that parallels Janet Wolff's disparagement of the 'production of culture' approach (in her term) within the American sociology of art.<sup>65</sup> In Wolff's view, the small-scale study of a particular art institution seen to typify this method has value in the factual information it provides. However, it also 'tends to empiricism' and lacks the critical perspective on the wider social contexts and historical processes that would enhance its 'explanatory power'; in other words, that would reveal how the art institution instantiates the wider power structures operative in society.<sup>66</sup> Wolff's strictures, however, assume an underlying causal framework for society and history – specifically an adapted Marxism – against which findings related to art institutions can be interpreted in order to transcend empiricism and take a

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<sup>64</sup> Garlake, *New Art, New World*, 10. The fullest existing account of the 'support system' for prints is in Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 'Introduction'; Robin Garton (ed.), *British Printmakers*, chapters 5 to 9 also contain short, historical summaries.

<sup>65</sup> Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art* (second edition), Basingstoke and London: MacMillan, 1993, 148.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

place in an explanatory theory.<sup>67</sup> This study makes no such assumption and is therefore left with the description of historical facts, explained only by locally traced networks of causation. To that extent it is explicitly modest in ambition, though confident in the inherent interest of the material, in the absence of grander claims.

Both in this *Introduction* and in the body of the thesis, I use the term printmaking ‘field’ to refer, collectively, to the institutions of the support system, to printmakers and to the prints produced. In doing so, I use the term relatively loosely rather than in any strong, theoretically-defined sense, such as the influential elaboration by Pierre Bourdieu.<sup>68</sup> I do not, for example, follow Bourdieu by suggesting that the field is constituted by identifiable rules or that its internal struggles, on the micro scale, can be understood as part of broader contests within a society-wide field of power. Rather, the value of the term for this thesis is, I suggest, in helping to bring out two features of the historical situation described. First, the fact that printmaking was understood as distinct from the wider field of visual art, but integrated with it at a higher level. Second, that it was viewed as sufficiently coherent for individuals and institutions to seek to define and redefine it, sometimes in competing ways (and in relation to such things as its audience and acceptable forms of originality).<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> As Wolff states: ‘My own view is that historical materialism offers the best method of analysis of society at the moment’. *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>68</sup> See Caroline Pollentier, ‘Configuring Middleness: Bourdieu, l’Art Moyen and the Broadbrow’, Erica Brown and Mary Grover, *Middlebrow Literary Cultures: The Battle of the Brows, 1920-1960*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012; Fyfe, *Art, Power and Modernity* 24-25. My usage of ‘field’ is primarily derived from Lisa Tickner and David Peters Corbett’s introductory chapter in *British Art in the Cultural Field*, Chichester: Blackwell, 2007.

<sup>69</sup> The idea of forces competing to impose ideas on a field has echoes of Bourdieu, but I do not link this competition to wider operations of power.

The second type of subject examined in the thesis comprises the print images themselves. Here, the approach is interpretative, looking to discover potential meanings offered by the images when considered in their historical context. In contrast to the examination of the print support network, this approach aims at knowledge of a wider application: the particular meanings carried in the works can nuance understandings of the historical period as a whole, beyond its art institutions. Attention to prints cannot, of course, provide a comprehensive history, but it can register complexity and emotional response: for example, in later chapters I note both the exile Fred Uhlman's heartfelt and positive visual response to the qualities he found in Britain's political traditions, but also the apprehension manifest in Barnett Freedman's *People*, as a British Jew surviving domestic manifestations of fascism.

Above, I have appealed to an idea of interpreting prints 'in their historical context'. However, a critique of 'context' is well established within art history. For some, and again this is at root a Marxist position, it is a rather bloodless concept, one that fails to acknowledge that to analyse an artwork historically is to understand its meanings as produced by the 'battlefield' of competing discourses in which it sits, including that of the dominant ideology of the particular moment, produced by its ruling socio-political interests.<sup>70</sup> In this view, an artwork is one representation circulating within competing systems of representation, which we might call ideologies, with its meaning derived from them, and thus not a discrete object in dialogue with a surrounding context. The task of the historian is then to trace the residues of ideology, of struggles for power, on the face of the

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<sup>70</sup> T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1985, 8.

work. However, I would make a similar counter-argument to that given in relation to Wolff: if the social world is not, in fact, best understood as fully structured by power relations acting through contending systems of representation then there is no totalising explanatory framework which dissolves the distinction of work and context. The relationship between the two terms thus returns to being a legitimate approach to historical analysis, with questions of power being an important, but not exclusive, way of thinking about context. The mood of Rogers' *The Shot Tower from Somerset House* can thus be understood as a sympathetic response to narratives of national solidarity if placed in the context of contemporary rhetoric of post-war reconstruction, but without committing to an understanding of that rhetoric as part of a comprehensive symbolic system or as working for the interests of power.

For other scholars, with a position based in semiotics, any appeal to the 'context-idea' brings a danger of other (if related) false assumptions.<sup>71</sup> Once again, thinking in terms of context is seen to encourage an approach to the art object as essentially different from its environment rather than, in this view, both being systems of signs. Further, it is claimed, the idea of 'context' both encourages a belief in a readily available, full-and-final explanation for the features of a work, and also hides the influence of the present on interpretation – in particular the fact that it is the historian who selects the relevant context used to elucidate the artwork. Regardless of the adequacy of the wider semiotic framework, these two points

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<sup>71</sup> Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson, 'Semiotics and Art History', the *Art Bulletin*, 73:2, June, 1991, 187. This is the founding text for such an approach, though Bal and Bryson do not rule out of bounds a self-aware use of context.

have force.<sup>72</sup> I do not believe, however, that they invalidate the use of context as a concept in this study for two primary reasons. Firstly, my intention is not to *explain* any specific print (that is, to show why it is as it is) but rather to *interpret* them, that is to offer defensible, historically-informed readings which also offer something to our wider understanding of the period. A consideration of context thus opens the work to fresh interpretation rather than closing it down through explanation, though this does not mean that I abjure the language of explanation entirely. When looking beyond an individual work to correlations between patterns of social and artistic change (such as the decreasing use of 'primitive' visual elements in British art alongside a retreat from empire) then suggesting a local causal aspect seems reasonable. Secondly, and in line with the semiotic critique, I have attempted to be open and reflexive about my selection of contextual material when interpreting specific images. I have already mentioned how a sympathy for the ideas and actions of the Attlee government, and an interest in their eclipse, has affected my selection of images and this also influences my judgement of their qualities and the relevant context for interpretation. This can also be taken to underlie my antipathy to teleological histories of post-war British art in which aesthetic fulfilment is achieved by overcoming post-war values with these cast as parochial, patriarchal, ameliorist and attached to imperial status.

Putting theoretical questions to one side, the close analysis of post-war print images throws up its own practical difficulties. Print runs conducted at art schools or commercial printers sometimes show significant tonal variation between impressions, while in a case

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<sup>72</sup> With regard to the first point, Bal and Bryson make the strong claim that a final explanation is in principle impossible; I do not think this can be supported, but since any final explanation is unlikely to be achievable in practice their stance remains useful.

such as the *Artists' International Association 1951 Lithographs* the existence of an offset run alongside the hand-pulled edition means that some impressions are reversed and the colours distinct. I have attempted to acknowledge these variations where they are relevant to interpretation. A further challenge in the conduct of this research has been first-hand access to prints (for information on impressions viewed see 'Sources and Collections for Artists' Prints' in the back matter). Holdings in public collections are poor, disbursed and sometimes hard to find. In the case of Tate this situation partly reflects the late origins of its print department (founded in 1975) but more generally it can reasonably be ascribed to the entrenched, negative perceptions of the period. It is notable, for instance, that Tate's impressions from the *AIA 1951 Lithographs* are held in its archive rather than the print department, while the Victoria and Albert Museum's partial set of Merlyn Evans' *Vertical Suite in Black* is neither grouped nor accurately titled.<sup>73</sup> My hope for this thesis is that it can help the prints of this period emerge from their more obscure corners.

*Chapter One* begins the task with a history of the printmaking field in the ten years from 1945, starting with the unexpected view among some contemporaries that these years saw 'a boom in lithographs'.

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<sup>73</sup> Tate's explains this arrangement in terms of the archival principle of keeping donated collections entire; however it seems to have had consequences for conservation: in response to requests made during the research for this study, Tate discovered (and reported verbally) that their impression of Edwin La Dell's *M.C.C. at Lords* (1951) is permanently lost. Unfortunately, the same fate has befallen the impression once held by the Arts Council Collection which was reported as missing in 1989 and formally deaccessioned in 1995 (my thanks to Jodie Edwards of the Arts Council Collection for this information, personal correspondence, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2017).

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**A 'BOOM IN LITHOGRAPHS': THE PRINTMAKING FIELD IN BRITAIN TO THE**  
**MID-1950s**

In J.B. Priestley's novel *Sir Michael and Sir George: A Comedy of the New Elizabethans*, the buccaneering Sir Michael chairs a long and difficult meeting of COMSA, a satirical take on the Arts Council. At length, he reaches an item from his unimaginative visual arts director, Cecil Tarlton: "'Now, what's next? *Lithographs for Sunderland?* What are you up to now Cecil?'" asks an exasperated Sir Michael, but with that the scene moves on and his question is left hanging.<sup>74</sup> By 1964, when the novel was published, lithographs could thus be the butt of a joke – a cliché of provincial, art-based do-goodery, even for a champion of 'broad brow' culture like Priestley.<sup>75</sup> In this opening chapter, I concentrate on a slightly earlier period, but one when the foundations for Priestley's stereotype were laid: that is the decade, loosely considered, after 1945. It was then that colour lithography came to prominence in Britain and initiatives to promote it as a popular, affordable art form reached a peak. The chapter builds an account of how these twin developments shaped the printmaking field and it is thus largely focussed on the institutions of the art support system, in Margaret Garlake's term cited in my *Introduction*. These were the institutions, including publishers, galleries and critics, that collectively underpinned the production and reception of prints and provided the conceptual framework through which printmaking was understood and debated.

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<sup>74</sup> J. B. Priestley, *Sir Michael and Sir George: A Comedy of the New Elizabethans*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1964, 32.

<sup>75</sup> J.B Priestley, 'High, Low, Broad', *Open House: A Book of Essays*, London: Heinemann, 1927, 162 – 167.



The chapter begins by considering a paradox. As has been noted, print scholars and commentators have portrayed the immediate post-war situation as straightforwardly unproductive (in the manner of Gross) or with prints made only against the odds (as with Carey and Griffiths or Andrea Rose). Yet at the time, critics often referred blithely to a print renaissance, even quite early in the period. The first section below proposes that this apparent contradiction can be understood if we recognise the extent and rapidity of the fashion for colour lithographs, a medium which had been largely ignored in Britain until the late 1930s. It was this one emergent form that saw substantial activity and that led to buoyant critical comment.

In considering the history of post-war lithography, a distinction can be drawn between, on the one hand, its promotion as a prestige limited-edition form within the apparatus of fine-art retailing and, on the other, the production of cheap, large-edition prints aimed at democratising art ownership by attracting new, lower income buyers.<sup>76</sup> The second section of this chapter concentrates on the former, approaching the topic through the lens of one specific exhibition, *Colour-Prints by the Society of London Painter-Printers* held at the Redfern Gallery in 1948. It describes how transfer lithography was used to attract artists with an existing reputation as painters and traces the consequences of this. The third section then

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<sup>76</sup> This is the approach taken in Garton (ed.), *British Printmakers* where the latter are separated into a separate chapter ('The Poster-Print'); see also Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 20. For an explanation of the technology and process of lithography see Appendix 1.

explores the alternative, democratising tradition of the large-edition lithograph. It examines the pre-war roots of this approach and the gap between a strong rhetoric of art for all and the realities of a modestly extended audience.

The post-war perception of a print renaissance provides evidence for my overarching argument that the state of printmaking was more complex than subsequent narratives have tended to allow. However, assessment of contemporary sources also makes clear that there were serious weaknesses in the field. The final section of this chapter discusses how questions about who made, sold and bought prints – and in particular their democratising reputation – had a reciprocal influence on their continued secondary status within the wider art field. In doing so it argues that the distinction between limited and large edition lithographs, though real, can also be overstated. A rhetoric of cheap pictures was applied across the piece, while for both their actual audience was, primarily, an extended section of the middle class.

Over the course of this first chapter, I also look in detail at a number of individual images, some shown at *Colour-Prints by the Society of London Painter-Printers* and some from the first series of Lyons Lithographs published in 1947 (taken as an example of the large-edition lithograph series). In looking at the Lyons prints, in particular, I probe the relationship between audience and meaning and suggest that, for the images examined at least, the pictures offered the possibility of subtle but challenging reflections on the aftermath of war. This is at odds with the series'

reputation as ‘teashop lithographs’ but it establishes the outlines of an argument central to the following chapters and their consideration of work from the 1950s.<sup>77</sup> This argument is that the interpretation of print images offers an insight into the politics, culture and experience of the period and, more specifically, that contemporary lithograph series can profitably be understood as creating a particular artistic space, one informed by a commitment to democratising art and supporting an engagement with current issues.

In *Chapter Four*, I consider St George’s Gallery Prints, founded in 1954 and widely credited with modernising print production and retailing and with extending the print market beyond lithography. In that chapter, I evaluate these claims and in doing so consider how aspects of the field discussed here developed as the 1950s progressed.

### **An ‘extraordinary renaissance’: the rise of colour lithography**

When contemporary critics and commentators looked at the printmaking scene of the later 1940s and the 1950s, they often saw feast rather than the famine which came to dominate retrospective accounts. However, the subject of such sanguine commentary was, in almost

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<sup>77</sup> For ‘teashop lithographs’ see G. S. Whittet, ‘Teashop Lithographs’, the *Studio*, 136, July-December 1948 and also the title of the exhibition *The Lyons Teashops Lithographs: Art in a time of Austerity*, Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne, July-September 2013. The layout and mood of the venues was less twee than ‘teashop’ might suggest. Unlike the Lyons Lithographs, the series considered in the two following chapters were, primarily, limited editions, though still with a relatively broad audience in mind.

all cases, one specific print medium: colour lithography.<sup>78</sup> As early as 1948, an anonymous reviewer in the *Scotsman* rehearsed the story of the 1920s etching boom, only to suggest that there were potential parallels with the present: ‘To-day there is just a danger that we might be threatened with a boom in lithographs.’<sup>79</sup> Near simultaneously, Peter Floud at the Victoria and Albert Museum launched the ambitious touring exhibition *150 Years of Lithography* – designed, with its commissions, to build the medium’s status – stating confidently that ‘lithography is to-day a living and active art in this country’.<sup>80</sup> Four years later, in 1952, Stephen Bone concluded in the *Manchester Guardian* that the ‘craft and art of colour lithography seems to be in a flourishing state’.<sup>81</sup> By the middle of the decade, *Art News and Review* could look back to consider the origin of the ‘present popularity of the “artists’ print”’ and confidently ascribe it to three sets of post-war lithographs: the large-edition series of Lyons and School Prints, and a set of images of Cambridge Colleges by Edwin La Dell.<sup>82</sup> Each of these editions, the paper stated, ‘have achieved great popularity and are purchased by the public in record numbers’. In addition to a perceived popularity with the public, commentators also saw lithography as of growing interest to artists, and

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<sup>78</sup> As is seen in the quotations below, contemporaries used both ‘colour lithography’ and the more general ‘lithography’; however, reference was almost universally to the former – this was the new presence in exhibitions and publications and black and white work became relatively unusual.

<sup>79</sup> ‘Art in London’, the *Scotsman*, 18<sup>th</sup> December 1948. The review is of an exhibition of prints by Edwin La Dell, Lynton Lamb and Charles Mozley held at the AIA Gallery. The interwar etching boom had seen startling price inflation, a strong network of dealers across British cities and in America, several journals aimed at the collectors’ market, and the emergence of star artists who were specialist etchers; a relatively swift collapse followed the Wall Street Crash of 1929 (Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 9-17).

<sup>80</sup> *150 Years of Lithography 1748-1948*, 1. In 1954, lithography’s anniversary was again used an opportunity to promote its pan-European artistic heritage with the publication of Felix H. Man’s *150 Years of Artists’ Lithographs, 1803-1953*, London: Heinemann, 1954, with an accompanying exhibition at the Zwemmer Gallery (the *Times*, 13 May 1954, 2). Looking across Europe, Man claimed that ‘In recent years lithography, and in particular colour lithography has become very popular with the younger generation’ (*150 Years*, 10).

<sup>81</sup> Stephen Bone, ‘Colour Lithography’, the *Manchester Guardian*, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1952, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/16/3 (I have not been able to locate this article within the *Guardian* electronic archive).

<sup>82</sup> ‘Portrait of the Artists No. 178’, *Art News and Review*, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1955, 1.

younger artists especially. More 'artists have gone in for colour lithography', the *Manchester Guardian* stated in 1951 and the sentiment was amplified by the *Times* a year later: 'nowadays almost every young artist tries his hand at the medium'.<sup>83</sup> Barnett Freedman, who had been a champion of lithography over the long-term, saw this new popularity as rooted in the immediate pre-war years, reflecting in 1950 on how 'the last fifteen years have seen an extraordinary renaissance of this *modus operandi* among artists'.<sup>84</sup> An official imprimatur for this 'renaissance' came in 1954, when a set of 'Recent Artists Lithographs' were hung at the British Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, a testament to the medium's salience for artists and an affirmation of it by senior figures in Britain's art administration.<sup>85</sup>

It seems likely that one important attraction of colour lithography for younger artists and audiences was the lack of the fusty, Edwardian associations of small, black and white intaglio prints and particularly etchings (which had themselves dominated the print market from the entrepreneurial days of Seymour Haden and J.M.W. Whistler in the 1860s

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<sup>83</sup> 'Toulouse-Lautrec', the *Manchester Guardian*, 30<sup>th</sup> July 1951, 4; 'Poor Man's Pictures', the *Times*, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1952, 8.

<sup>84</sup> Barnett Freedman, 'Auto-Lithography or Substitute Work of Art', *Penrose Annual*, 44, 1950, 62-3, 63; the idea of rebirth presumably alludes to the early successes of the Senefelder Club, discussed below.

<sup>85</sup> *Exhibition of works by Nicholson, Bacon, Freud, "The unknown political prisoner" prize-winning maquette and related studies by Butler, Recent Artists' Lithographs: the British Pavilion / organised by the British Council for the XXVII Biennale, Venice, 1954*, exhibition catalogue, the British Pavilion, Venice Biennale, 1954, unpaginated. Britain's presence at the Biennale was organised by the Arts Council and its advisory committee included Herbert Read and John Rothenstein. The selected artists comprised a range of senior figures and younger artists: Allin Braund, Geoffrey Clarke, Henry Cliffe, Robert Colquhoun, William Gear, Henry Moore, Eduardo Paolozzi, Ceri Richards, William Scott, and Graham Sutherland. Works displayed included Scott's 'Cornish Harbour' (originally intended for the AIA 1951 series, see Appendix 5) and his 'Busby', from the RCA *Coronation Lithographs* (discussed in *Chapter Three*) as well as Clarke's 'Crown' (see Appendix 6). It should be acknowledged that the lithographs were presented as a pendant to the paintings and sculpture; whilst the latter received a commentary within the catalogue, the lithographs were simply listed; the *Times* (21<sup>st</sup> June 1954, 9) described them as a 'valuable addition' but three days later (24<sup>th</sup> June 1954, 10) as 'a rather feeble little anthology'.

to the bust of the early 1930s).<sup>86</sup> One commentator remarked in 1949 that ‘many people who would like to buy pictures to-day but cannot afford to do so, scorn the graphic arts because prints are usually black and white, and not in colour’ and proposed colour lithography as the antidote.<sup>87</sup> According to Stephen Bone in 1952, lithographs offered a winning combination of ‘bright pictures and low prices’, while in 1956 the *Times* noted that modern English prints were often more colourful than equivalent paintings (Figure 4).<sup>88</sup> For potential buyers, lithography’s broad patches of coloured ink offered an easy fit with the light modern interior promoted at the Festival of Britain and in contemporary home magazines such as *House Beautiful*.

For artists whose experience and reputation lay outside printmaking, a widespread perception that colour lithography was inherently painterly added to its attraction. Freedman had made this point in 1936, talking about lithography’s range of tonality, delicacy, and ease of manipulation on the surface, and repeated it after the war.<sup>89</sup> John Minton put the same belief at the centre of his contribution to the BBC radio broadcast that accompanied *150 Years of Lithography* in 1948: ‘It [lithography] doesn’t seem to me to be really a graphic medium ... [I] think of it as something much nearer painting’.<sup>90</sup> Less

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<sup>86</sup> This argument is made in Robert Meyrick and Harry Heuser, “...poised on the edge” Vaughan as Printmaker’, Colin Cruise (ed.), *Figure and Ground: Keith Vaughan Drawings, Prints and Photographs 1935 – 62*, Bristol: Sansom and Company, 2013, 41.

<sup>87</sup> Philip James, ‘Foreword’, *Les Peintres Graveurs*, exhibition catalogue, Redfern Gallery, London, 1<sup>st</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> December 1949, unpaginated.

<sup>88</sup> Bone, ‘Colour Lithography’, the *Manchester Guardian*, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1952 (the review is of the Senefelder Club annual exhibition); ‘Promotion of the Colour Print’, the *Times*, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1956, 10 (the review is of the first New Editions exhibition at the Zwemmer Gallery, a work from which is shown at Figure 4).

<sup>89</sup> Barnett Freedman, ‘Lithography, a Painter’s Excursion’, *Signature*, 2, March 1936; for a repetition see Freedman, ‘Substitute Work of Art’, 63.

<sup>90</sup> *150 Years of Lithography*, transcript, Third Programme, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1948, BBC Written Archive Centre. Michael Rothenstein also made this point: lithography is ‘the one method a painter may use – and use happily – without extended technical experience’ (‘Prints and Printmaking’, *Art News and Review*, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1956, 2).

frequently articulated, but nonetheless in circulation, was the idea that there was a natural sympathy between lithography and formal trends in modern painting, in particular moves towards flatness and experiment with surface texture. The point was made at some length by the *Times*' critic in a review of three lithography exhibitions in 1952. From the late nineteenth century, it was claimed, art had welcomed features 'that drew attention to the picture plane in contrast to any modelling' and the 'texture of Lithography' did just this; it was thus 'as a direct result of this general interest in surfaces that the lithograph has by now so largely supplanted the etching ... as a method of producing artistic prints'.<sup>91</sup> By the start of the 1960s, the central relevance of colour lithography to contemporary printmakers was seen as assured on just such grounds. An anonymous reviewer in the *Times* noted how, 'Fifty years ago a print usually meant an etching; nowadays as often as not it means a colour lithograph. Or at least these two techniques can be taken as the representative norm at two different periods when print-making has been in favour'.<sup>92</sup> The reviewer ascribed this situation to the painterly and the modern qualities of lithography, its suitability to contemporary tastes for 'plangency of colour' and 'freedom of handling'.<sup>93</sup>

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Nonetheless, the claim should be treated as a rhetorical trope which became popular at this moment, rather than as authoritative. The use of brushes and crayons in lithography gives it plausibility, but equally the complexity of preparing colour separations requires planning and execution radically different to that in painting (a point acknowledged by Edwin La Dell in 'Autolithography at the Royal College of Art', *Penrose Annual* 46, 1952, 46-48, 46). Nor have painters always shown a preference for lithography among print media, either before or since.

<sup>91</sup> 'Poor Man's Pictures', the *Times*, 8. Contemporary lithographs were thus sometimes described as 'modern' see G. S. Whittet, 'London Commentary', the *Studio*, 145, January-June 1951, 52; 'Colour and Vitality by Lithographers', the *Scotsman*, 16<sup>th</sup> December 1957 (Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 992/8/6); and comments by Nicolas Bentley on the first series of Lyons Lithographs, discussed below.

<sup>92</sup> 'Contemporary Prints', the *Times*, 21<sup>st</sup> July 1961, 15. The review is of the 1961 New Editions exhibition.

<sup>93</sup> Other printmaking techniques did, of course, continue to be practiced. For post-war etching (where S.W. Hayter was the long-term champion of innovation and Geoffrey Clarke and Anthony Gross were active) see Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmakers*, 205. The Society of Wood Engravers had just 28 members in 1953 but was sufficiently forward looking enough to embrace colour linocuts (John Buckland-Wright, 'The Society of Wood Engravers', the *Studio*, vol. 146, July – December 1953, 134-141, 137); in 1956, Eric Newton noted how the linocut, 'that cinderella [sic] among printing methods', had 'now taken on a new look' thanks to

This dominant position for colour lithography in post-war arose from a low base. In 1909 the Senefelder Club had been founded to promote artists' lithography but after early success had lost much of its vitality.<sup>94</sup> In the period between the wars it acted largely to sustain a market based around wealthy collectors, by acting as a guarantor of quality while limiting supply, and its operations tended to restrict production to specialists. For buyers, it offered lay membership and a specially commissioned annual print, while its lithographers were encouraged to produce black and white, hand-pulled and limited editions – a format that connected fine-art lithography to high status intaglio techniques and distanced it from the commercial, colour lithographs used in advertising.<sup>95</sup> Some signs of change had, however, begun to appear in the late 1930s. In 1937, Contemporary Lithographs Ltd published its first series, aimed at schools, with a second following in 1938, for a more general audience, the firm having been founded for the purpose by the art dealer Robert Wellington in association with John Piper.<sup>96</sup> Wellington and Piper's activities inverted much of the Senefelder approach, publishing colour, machine-printed and unlimited editions based on a commercial model of high volumes and relatively low prices (the products were inevitably varied; Figure 5 shows Edward Bawden's *Braintree Market* from the first, school-

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the innovations of Edward Bawden and Michael Rothenstein (The *Listener*, 19<sup>th</sup> July, 1956, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 992/8/5). Another relatively new medium was screenprinting: William Gear exhibited screenprints at *London Group Prints* in 1955 and the following year a first screenprinting studio was established by John Coplans (Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 221).

<sup>94</sup> Kemille Moore, 'Lithography from c. 1875 to the 1920s' in Garton (ed.), *British Printmakers*, 191 – 96. For the earlier history of lithography in Britain see Clinton Adams, 'The Nature of Lithography', Pat Gilmour (ed.), *Lasting Impressions: lithography as art*, London: Alexandria Press, 1988, 28.

<sup>95</sup> Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 10. The aesthetic and political conservatism of the Club can be overstated: for example, in the 1930s the Communist Party members and political artists James Boswell and James Holland both published or exhibited work through it.

<sup>96</sup> See Antony Griffiths, 'Contemporary Lithographs Ltd', *Print Quarterly*, 8:4, December 1991, 388-402.



facing series). The following year the Artist International Association (AIA) worked on publication of its own *Everyman Prints*, giving a more explicitly political spin to the idea of an affordable means of art ownership.

These late 1930s initiatives provided the immediate antecedent for the various series of popular, large-edition, colour lithographs that were a distinctive feature of the post-war printmaking field (and which are described further, below). At the same time, however, colour lithographs were also gaining more of a toe-hold in the fine-art gallery, largely in the form of hand-printed, limited editions. Even the Senefelder Club was recognising change: its annual exhibition in 1948 was dominated by work in colour.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, for contemporaries, this upsurge in colour lithography across both prestige and popular forms often appeared as a single phenomenon without a strong distinction made between the two. Thus the *150 Years of Lithography* exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1948 placed machine-printed lithographs under a specific heading but otherwise included them within its survey of artists' printmaking, while as late as 1955 *Art News and Review* assigned the popularity of artists' lithography to a mix of popular large-edition series and a fine-art gallery commission, as note above.<sup>98</sup> Among those promoting colour lithography as a fine art form there was more ambivalence about such inclusivity. The *Les Peintres-Graveurs* show at the Redfern Gallery, in London's west end in 1949, included

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<sup>97</sup> The *Observer*, 25<sup>th</sup> July 1948, 2.

<sup>98</sup> *150 Years of Lithography*, 9 (the large-edition prints shown were drawn from the *Everyman Prints* and series by Contemporary Lithographs and School Prints); 'Portrait of the Artists No. 178', *Art News and Review*, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1955, 1. Michael Rothenstein's review of printmaking in 1956 also ranged across the two modes ('Prints and Printmaking', *Art News and Review*, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1956, 2). Though 'machine-printed' and 'large-edition' are not necessarily synonyms, for all practical purposes this was the case in the period.

examples from the large-edition School Prints series among its hand-pulled prints but, as elaborated in the next section, the preceding exhibition of works from the Society of London Painter-Printers could seem to want to distance itself from more popular lithography.<sup>99</sup> That said, the intended audience for each form does not seem to have been so far apart, both appealing to those sections of the middle class unable to afford easel paintings, as I note at the end of the chapter.

Given colour lithography's lack of deep national roots, it was French precedents that tended to be invoked when it was promoted in a prestige context, and in particular the bravura colour prints from the turn of the century by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Pierre Bonnard, Édouard Vuillard and others. The status of French work was apparent from its prominence within *150 Years of Lithography*, both in terms of the many French prints displayed and their visible influence on the accompanying British work (the loose marks and emotionally-inflected colour in Rogers' *The Shot Tower from Somerset House* showing a clear debt to Bonnard and Vuillard, for instance).<sup>100</sup> The exhibition's curator, Peter Floud, noted how in France, 'all the foremost painters and designers of the day have regarded it almost as an obligation to master the technique of lithography and to produce important series of prints'.<sup>101</sup> This status was capitalised on by the Redfern Gallery in a series of mixed shows from 1949 in which contemporary British work was included alongside French colour

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<sup>99</sup> *Les Peintres-Graveurs*, exhibition catalogue, Redfern Gallery, 1<sup>st</sup> December to 31<sup>st</sup> December 1949, unpaginated.

<sup>100</sup> Three prints by Toulouse-Lautrec were shown in the Leeds version of the show, exceeded only by Honoré Daumier's earlier, black and white work; a solo exhibition of Lautrec's work was organised by the Arts Council in 1951 ('Toulouse-Lautrec', *Manchester Guardian*, 30<sup>th</sup> July 1951, 4). The influence of earlier French work on British lithography was noted in a negative review of the Senefelder Clubs' 1948 exhibition by Sarah Richard, 'Senefelder Club of Lithographer' *Art News and Review*, 18<sup>th</sup> June 1948, 3.

<sup>101</sup> *150 Years of Lithography*, 1.

lithographs, often of an earlier generation, the latter acting as a spur to serious consideration of the former.<sup>102</sup>

These exhibitions followed on from the Redfern Gallery's first post-war print display, *Colour-Prints by the Society of London Painter-Printers*, in 1948, an exhibition that was itself dominated by lithographs. This show, along with the subsequent activities of the Society, has been widely cited as sustaining artists' printmaking in Britain in the otherwise fallow years of the late 1940s.<sup>103</sup> In the section that follows, I assess the 1948 exhibition and the role it played in promoting and consolidating colour lithography in the British printmaking field. The particular idea of prestige lithography that it embodied – as modern, French, and, pre-eminently, as a painter's medium – was influential, as has already been seen. However, I also argue (including through attention to selected images) that the exploitation of one specific possibility opened up by lithography – for prints to be made with a minimum of commitment to the medium via the use of transfer paper – affected the set of works displayed and marked a distance from developments in the printmaking field that were to follow.

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<sup>102</sup> Catalogues for these shows refer to 'English' lithographs. Several prestigious London galleries showed French lithographs in the period, including Gimpel Fils and the Hanover, Marlborough and (in particular) Leicester Galleries. It is interesting to note that there was no equivalent to the post-war rise of colour lithography in other Anglophone countries where intaglio methods, in particular woodcuts, dominated (Adams, 'The Nature of Lithography', 35; Richard S. Field, 'Review: American Impressions: Prints Since Pollock by Riva Castleman', *The Print Collector's Newsletter*, 17: 1 (March–April 1986), 27).

<sup>103</sup> See: Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 20; Robin Garton, 'Modern Lithography: the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s', Garton (ed.) *British Printmaking*, 255; Man, *150 Years*, 36; Robertson, 'Introduction', *Out of Print*, 9; Samuel, 'Introduction', *British Prints*, 4–5. Margaret Garlake, in a contrast to other histories of the period, even suggests the exhibition was the kernel of a 'postwar print boom' (*New Art, New World*, 25).

***Colour-Prints by the Society of London Painter-Printers, 1948***

The first exhibition of the Society of London Painter-Printers, held at the Redfern Gallery in Cork Street, London, between November and December 1948, was striking in its size and scope. Indeed, the sheer quantity of works on display, and the variety and stature of the artists involved, could buttress the view that a time of plenty was dawning in British printmaking, founded on a new interest in colour lithography.<sup>104</sup> A work by Graham Sutherland was reproduced on the catalogue cover while participants included other artists with major pre-war reputations (such as Matthew Smith, Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell) as well as a younger contingent who had either gained attention during the war (among them Michael Ayrton and John Minton) or were just starting out on a professional career (for example Prunella Clough).<sup>105</sup> The images on display were eclectic, ranging from Jankel Adler's bold, monotonal faceting in *Portrait of a Girl* to Eileen Mayo's warm, tactile rendition of fur in *Cat in the Sun*, and from the neo-Baroque foreshortening in the muralist Hans Feibusch's biblical scenes, such as *The Entombment*, to the well-furnished domesticity in Edwin la Dell's *Tom Trying to Sit for a Picture* (Figures 6 to 9).<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> The catalogue lists one hundred and ten lithographs by sixty-one artists, complemented by fifty-one monotypes (the presence of these 'unique' impressions potentially buttressing the fine-art presentation of the show as a whole) and, despite the generic 'Painter-Printers' title, just eleven prints in other media (*Colour-Prints by the Society of London Painter-Printers*, exhibition catalogue, the Redfern Gallery, November – December 1948). A small number of works may, however, be mislabelled; for example, Blair Hughes-Stanton's 'The Rock' is listed by the Victoria and Albert Museum as a woodcut. As a comparison for the sheer size of the exhibition, the large *London Group Prints* exhibition of 1955 comprised seventy-six works, across all media, by thirty-three artists.

<sup>105</sup> Among the sixty-one lithographers there were also some who do not appear to have sustained an artistic career; for example Colynne Boivie, Muriel Juniper and Louis Crombeke have no record in Buckman, *Artists in Britain since 1945*.

<sup>106</sup> There is no comprehensive collection of prints from the exhibition and some are untraceable. The largest relevant set is in the collection of the British Council; this holds (on my estimate) thirty-one relevant lithographs, thirteen monoprints and two other works.

Although the name of the Society of London Painter-Printers was designed to invoke the cachet of the artist-led print exhibiting societies founded in earlier decades, this was little more than a ruse.<sup>107</sup> In reality, the Society was christened specifically for the 1948 exhibition and lacked any institutional substance. Instead, the exhibition was instigated and organised by the combination of a fine-art retailer, the Redfern Gallery itself, and a print publisher, Miller's Press of Lewes, Sussex. Miller's was itself a somewhat eccentric organisation that was created, owned and run by two older, aristocratic sisters (Frances Byng Stamper and Caroline Lucas) with a taste for artistic entrepreneurship and strong connections to the Bloomsbury group via Duncan Grant (who, with Vanessa Bell, lived nearby at Charleston).<sup>108</sup> The sisters had founded Miller's Gallery in 1941 and, utilising their London connections, attracted touring exhibitions from the wartime government's Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA). In 1945, Miller's Press was established and the Gallery complemented a CEMA exhibition of Continental colour prints with Miller's own first publication, a portfolio of lithographs by Grant, Bell, H. E. du Plessis and Lucas herself.<sup>109</sup> The next venture for Miller's Press was the 1948 exhibition.

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<sup>107</sup> The prototype for such societies was the Society of Painter-Etchers, founded in 1880 under the leadership of Francis Seymour Haden and with members including Hubert von Herkomer, Alphonse Legros, and James Tissot; it received a royal charter in 1888 and as the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers continued to operate in the post-war period but with a restriction to black and white etching and engraving (until 1953) and an exclusion of lithography (until 1987) (*Print Rebels: Haden, Palmer, Whistler and the origins of the Royal Society of Painter-Printmakers*, exhibition catalogue, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, September 2018-January 2019).

<sup>108</sup> See Diana Crook, *The Ladies of Miller's*, Dale House Press: Lewes, 1996, and *The Ladies of Miller's: The Miller's Gallery and Press of Lewes in the 1940s and 1950s*, exhibition catalogue, Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne, May – June 1989. Lucas, who was born in 1886, had exhibited in Paris and London in the 1920s and 1930s and showed lithographs at the 1948 exhibition. The sisters' precise class position is moot but they were part of the family of the Viscounts of Torrington and were wards of Princess Louise, daughter of Queen Victoria.

<sup>109</sup> H.E. du Plessis had had significant success with impressionist inspired oil paintings in the 1930s.

The show's scale and diversity seemed designed to project printmaking – and lithography in particular – as a widespread and legitimate practice in contemporary British art. Two aspects of the organisers' approach underpinned this. The first was a willingness to improvise in gathering material and in this the Redfern appears to have been heavily involved (despite a tendency to downplay the gallery's role both at the time and afterwards).<sup>110</sup> For example, Victor Pasmore's contribution, the lithograph *Abstract*, was a repurposed version of an earlier poster design and its inclusion seems likely to have been motivated at least in part by Pasmore having joined the Redfern Gallery the year before, though it was also an invigorating presence in the show (Figure 10).<sup>111</sup> Indeed, a significant number of works displayed were not, in fact, Miller's publications (though the source of some is unclear).<sup>112</sup> Several were pre-war works, including colotype book illustrations by Paul Nash as well as Basil Jonzen's 1937 lithograph *Almond Blossom, Tenerieffe*, produced on a visit to the island sponsored by the Redfern Gallery and presumably part of its stock. Among the more recent works, Prunella Clough's *Eel-net* (at least) was printed on her own press while others had their origins in various ventures – including several commissions from the Victoria and Albert Museum's *150 Years of Lithography* exhibition (among which was *The Shot Tower from Somerset House*, discussed in my *Introduction*).<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Both Clive Bell's original catalogue introduction ('The Society of London Painter-Printers') and Diana Crook's to *The Ladies of Miller's* at Pallant House concentrate exclusively on the Miller's Press role. Speculatively, this seems to reflect an inherent fascination to the sister's story that also masked Redfern's more seriously commercial interest.

<sup>111</sup> The poster was for a London Group exhibition earlier in the year; an example is held by the Victoria and Albert Museum (E.512-1964). For the print, it seems likely that a further edition, on better paper, was simply taken from the existing plate. Neither poster nor print are included in Alan Bowness, *Victor Pasmore with a Catalogue Raisonné of the paintings, constructions and graphics 1926-1975*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1980. An exhibition of Pasmore's work at the Redfern Gallery was concurrent with the print show ('Painter-Printers', the *Times*, 7<sup>th</sup> December 1949, 7).

<sup>112</sup> Some of these are accredited to other organisations in the catalogue, some are not.

<sup>113</sup> The date of the Jonzen work is given by the V&A, CIRC.224-1939; for his Tenerife trip, see also Buckman, *Artists in Britain*, 852. For Clough's home press see Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 174; it

The second factor enabling the exhibition's range, and this time related strictly to Miller's own commissions, was the use of transfer paper in the production of the lithographs. This technique allowed an artist to create a design on prepared paper, with Miller's dispatching the result to their printers (either the Chiswick Press in London or the prestigious atelier of Louis Ravel in Paris) where the picture was transferred to a lithographic stone and editioned.<sup>114</sup> The use of transfer paper in this way was a possibility unique to lithography and also relatively commonplace, though not uncontroversial.<sup>115</sup> However, it had not previously been made central to the strategy of a publishing house in the way pursued by Miller's. For those at the press, the approach seems to have been conceived as a way of attracting painters to the enterprise by minimising the distance between their existing practice and their attempt at printmaking, thereby keeping the qualities of the former as well as avoiding the need for specialist technical skills. It was in this sense that participants were 'Painter-Printmakers'. This was the line taken in the catalogue introduction by Clive Bell, who had been secured for this role via the sisters' Bloomsbury connections. In it, Bell focused solely on lithography, described as particularly suited to painters. He cast the use of transfer paper as an effective ploy through which artists lacking

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is possible, but unlikely, that Miller's acted as publisher (Clough did later produce lithographs for Miller's using transfer paper, including *Cranes*, 1952, now at Tate).

<sup>114</sup> At some stage Miller's purchased a press but the catalogue to *Les Peintres-Graveurs* clarifies that this was not yet present. This catalogue additionally credits the printers Vincent Brooks Day Ltd. Philip James' note in the catalogue for an Arts Council exhibition of Millers' prints in 1954 mentions printing conducted by Mourlot, also in Paris, though I am unaware of other evidence supporting this (V&A Archive: ACGB/121/676). Relatively few of the prints show an edition size, examples at the 1948 exhibition that do vary between 20 and 50.

<sup>115</sup> In 1897 Joseph Pennell had sued Walter Sickert after the latter denied that Pennell's transfer prints could be properly called lithographs (for a general discussion of transfer paper see Clinton Adams, 'The Nature of Lithography', 27). Miller's has been credited with 're-introducing' the transfer process to Britain (*The Ladies of Miller's*, Towner, unpaginated) but this was not the case; Edward Bawden, for example, discusses transfer paper in relation to his work for the 1947 Lyons Lithographs (Charlotte Batchelor, *Tea and a Slice of Art*, Eastbourne: Artmonsky Arts and Towner Art Gallery, 2007, 45).

experience had been encouraged to try their hand, without the deterrent of having to leave their studio for the incommensurable print-shop or to work on an unfamiliar stone; it was this approach which had enabled the exhibition to become a 'fine and in some ways surprising collection of lithographs by contemporary British artists, some of whom are already famous, some of whom are generally reckoned promising, but of whom very few twelve months ago had serious thoughts of practising this delightful craft'.<sup>116</sup> The reception of the works displayed indicated that Miller's had succeeded in keeping the suggestion of painting hovering close by. The reviewer for the *Times*, for example, described them as 'not so much prints, with all the apparatus of microscopic craftsmanship which the print collectors favour, as slight, though entirely serious, pictures'<sup>117</sup> Despite the condescension, the combination of colour lithography and reputable painters had successfully signalled a break with the aesthetically conservative, specialist printmaking tradition associated with the 'etching boom' and placed *Colour-Prints by the Society of London Painter-Printers* in the fine art mainstream.

The first artist mentioned in the *Times'* review was Matthew Smith whose bold, broad line in works such as *Still Life I* effectively bore out the contrast claimed with earlier, intaglio traditions of detail and fine working (Figure 11).<sup>118</sup> Smith was one of the 'famous'

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<sup>116</sup> Bell, 'The Society of London Painter-Printers', unpaginated.

<sup>117</sup> 'Art Exhibition: Painter-Printers', the *Times*, 7<sup>th</sup> December 1948, 7.

<sup>118</sup> Four prints by Smith, all still lifes, are listed in the catalogue to the 1948 exhibition. *Still Life I* is also illustrated there and can be identified with *Still Life (fruit)* in the British Council collection (P2813, though this is dated by the British Council to 1949 and is on a lighter paper); Alice Keane illustrates the same work under the title 'Fruit in a Dish, with a Jug and Fish', but dated to c.1950-55, which appears to be an error (*The Two Mr Smiths: The life and work of Matthew Smith*, London: Lund Humphries in association with the Corporation of London, 1995, Plate 31). A lithograph titled *Still Life III* has passed through sale rooms, and is likely to have been displayed in 1948; this depicts similar objects to *Still Life I* but with blue as well as black lines and a higher



artists, in Bell's description, attracted to contribute to the exhibition through an invitation from Miller's and, it appears, the relative simplicity of the transfer paper process.<sup>119</sup> As such his work offers an illustration of the results of Miller's strategy. Aspects of *Still Life I* can be seen as straightforward transcriptions of Smith's painting practice. Combinations of fruit, bowl and jug had been motifs adopted since before the First World War, while the use of a heavy outline had long been part of his repertoire, characterising, in particular, his occasional pastels.<sup>120</sup> However, in approaching the transfer paper, and perhaps aware of his technical inexperience, Smith chose a simple brushed line, abandoning both modelling and the strong colour with which, as the only English pupil of Matisse, he was closely identified.<sup>121</sup> In their absence he introduced a greater deformation of objects than was usual in his work, and an ambiguity or double-functioning in his line (so a single brushstroke defines both the convex shape of the bowl and the concave lip of the jug). These approaches, along with the objects represented, reappeared in a series of oil paintings Smith created between 1950 and 1954, placing the lithographs in the main line of his development and suggesting that they acted as a site of experimentation.<sup>122</sup>

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degree of modelling. Garton shows a *Still Life* from 1948 that is very similar in execution to *Still Life I* and which may be another from the series (*British Printmakers.*, 261, Plate 471).

<sup>119</sup> The literature on Smith includes no records of earlier lithographs or other printmaking. Smith's first one-person show had been in 1926; he represented Britain at the Venice Biennale in 1938 and received a CBE in 1949 and a knighthood in 1954.

<sup>120</sup> For example see, *Still Life Jugs and Apples* (oil, 1938) illustrated in John Gledhill, *Catalogue Raisonné of the Oil Paintings of Matthew Smith*, Farnham and Burlington, Vermont: Lund Humphries, 2009, cat. no. 506, or *Fruit and Leaves in a Dish with Flattened Rim* (pastel, undated) illustrated in Keane, *The Two Mr Smiths*, plate 85.

<sup>121</sup> The British Council impression has a printed grey-green background while examples passing through sale rooms suggest others had a stronger yellow background; in either case background offered a gesture towards colour.

<sup>122</sup> See, for example, the various still lives with coloured fish (illustrated in Gledhill, *Catalogue Raisonné*, cat. nos. 699 and 702-04) and *Large Decoration* paintings (ibid., cat. nos. 697-98 and 700).

A repurposing of personal motifs could also be seen in *Shrimps at Sea*, the single contribution to the exhibition from the prominent British surrealist Eileen Agar who, like Smith, seems to have experimented with lithography in response to an invitation from Miller's (Figure 12).<sup>123</sup> Marine life had been a common source of shapes and symbols in her work (for example in her 1939 collage, *Fish Circus*) while swirling two-dimensional patterns set within clearly defined forms – perhaps the most striking element of *Shrimps at Sea* – had been used in drawings such as *Double Head* (from 1937).<sup>124</sup> In the lithograph, the result was a collage-effect, setting vivid blocks of pink-red ink within the fishy forms against a patterned blue-green background, the combination creating an ambiguous spatial effect – we could be looking down at decorative shrimp floating over the depths, or at vistas into a pink sea where tentacled creatures swim. Agar was thus able to select from her existing repertoire to create a strong but playful image despite, again like Smith, an inexperience with lithographic technique.

The twin examples of Smith and Agar show Miller's strategy successfully attracting painters who brought significant cachet to the 1948 exhibition but also produced images of considerable strength. However, the approach also had limitations. The combination of transfer paper and distant printers, with whom the artist had a limited relationship, did little to foster a commitment to printmaking. Though some alumni of the Society of London

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<sup>123</sup> The literature on Agar suggests this work was her first lithograph, though she had made woodcuts relatively early in her career, such as 'The Bird or Two Lovers' (1932). At Paul Nash's suggestion, Agar had been invited by Roland Penrose and Herbert Read to participate in the International Surrealist Exhibition in London in 1936.

<sup>124</sup> *Fish Circus* and *Double Head* are illustrated in Ann Simpson with David Gascoyne and Andrew Lambirth, *Eileen Agar, 1899-1991*, Edinburgh: Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, 1999, cat. nos. 52 and 40. The specific saw-tooth pattern in the rightmost shape of *Shrimps at Sea* can be seen in *The Modern Muse*, a 1934 oil painting, where it invokes a tribal mask (illustrated in Michel Remy, *Eileen Agar: Dreaming oneself Awake*, London: Reaktion Books, 2017, 56, plate 23.

Painter-Printers continued to practice lithography as a core concern, others, including Smith and Agar, did only limited further work. Even Clive Bell, in his catalogue introduction, acknowledged that artists would have to engage in the printing and proofing process, including working directly on the lithographic plate, if they were minded to achieve ‘perfection’ in their prints.<sup>125</sup> Moreover, in the longer term, this was a model for print publishing that would not be replicated, though in the immediate aftermath of the 1948 exhibition there was a bustle of further activity by both Miller’s and Redfern themselves. Bell had promised much from the new ‘Society’ – an annual exhibition, along with dissemination of prints by the Arts Council at home and the British Council overseas – and in the following years these intentions were partially realised. Further exhibitions were held at the Redfern Gallery in 1950 and 1951, the latter coinciding with a show under the banner of the Festival of Britain in Cardiff, while new artists were added to the Society’s roster, including Eduardo Paolozzi and Keith Vaughan (and the Redfern Gallery also began to publish transfer lithographs independently).<sup>126</sup> The Arts Council held a single touring exhibition of Millers’ prints but the British Council was more active, touring purchases from the 1948 exhibition intensively throughout the 1950s.<sup>127</sup> Millers’ eventual withdrawal from the

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<sup>125</sup> Clive Bell, ‘The Society of London Painter-Printers’, *Colour-Prints by the Society of London Painter-Printers*, Redfern Gallery, unpaginated. Bryan Robertson later wrote with regard to Miller’s output that ‘there was a perhaps facile response to ... transfer printing’ (Robertson, ‘Introduction’, *Out of Print*, 10).

<sup>126</sup> For later Society exhibitions see Samuel, *British Prints*, 40 and *The Society of London Painter-Printers Exhibition*, exhibition catalogue, Cardiff Capitol, 31<sup>st</sup> July – 21<sup>st</sup> August 1951 (the latter largely comprised material from the 1948 Redfern show). *Les Peintres-Graveurs* held at the Redfern in December 1949 included much Miller’s material and cited the sisters in its acknowledgements, but it did not use the Society of London Painter-Printers label; the Redfern Gallery also held further mixed lithograph shows in 1951 and 1952, and mixed print shows throughout the 1950s. For Paolozzi and Vaughan see *Contemporary British Lithographs Published by Millers of Lewes*, exhibition catalogue, Arts Council, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1954, V&A Archive, ACGB/121/676, cat. nos 23, 24 and 33. For Redfern’s own publication see Pat Gilmour, ‘Curiosity, trepidation, exasperation ... salvation! Ceri Richards, his Australian Printer, and Stanley Jones’, *Tamarind Papers*, 10:1, Spring 1987, 28 – 37.

<sup>127</sup> For the Arts Council’s 1954 exhibition see *Contemporary British Lithographs Published by Millers of Lewes*, exhibition catalogue. The British Council bought thirty-two monotypes and four copies of twenty-four

market in the mid-1950s was driven principally by the sisters' advancing age. The Arts Council exhibition had to be coaxed from them in 1954 but in that same year Robert Erskine opened St George's Gallery Prints, providing continuity in the existence of a specialist publisher. Writing later in the decade Bryan Robertson cited Miller's Press as a key antecedent of Erskine's operation.<sup>128</sup> However, there was also a significant contrast in approach. Though St George's Gallery Prints worked with a range of artists, its annual exhibitions had neither the conspicuous breadth and diversity nor the eye-catching big-name painters of *Colour-Prints by the Society of London Painter-Printers* in 1948. Rather, Erskine worked with a more limited set of artists, seeking commitment to a significant engagement with the printmaking process, ideally through production of a suite of prints. His solution to the difficulties faced by artists in working in a commercial print shop was not the use of transfer paper, but instead the establishment of a dedicated facility in the form of the Curwen Studio. Overall, the process of printmaking had been rethought as of value in itself rather than a hurdle to be minimised (I discuss St George's Gallery Prints further in *Chapter Four*).

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lithographs in 1948, the selection being made by Philip Hendy, Director of the National Gallery (<http://visualarts.britishcouncil.org/exhibitions/exhibition/contemporary-artists-lithographs-1949>, accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2018). Further prints were purchased later (see, for example, *Travelling Exhibition of Lithographs and Engravings by Contemporary British Artists*, exhibition catalogue, British Council, 1957, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 9712/3/4). The prints were a cheap and portable way to display what was seen as a strong and representative sample of contemporary British art, a view justified by the prints' reception (press reports from a display at the 1952 Berlin Festival are held at Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 9712/3/3).

<sup>128</sup> For the sister's indisposition in 1954 see V&A Archive, ACGB/121/676. For Robertson's sense of continuity see Bryan Robertson, 'Preface and a Profile', *The Graven Image*, exhibition catalogue, Whitechapel Art Gallery, April-May 1959, 2. There was a further connection between St George's Gallery Prints and the Society of London Painter-Printers via Basil Jonzen, who exhibited in 1948 and whose own art dealing business shared the St George's Gallery premises (Edward Lucie-Smith, 'Obituary: Karin Jonzen' the *Independent*, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1998, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/obituary-karin-jonzen-1142549.html>, accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2018).

In its determined inclusivity, *Colour-Prints by the Society of London Painter-Printers* avoided any singular stylistic or intellectual pitch, its content including everything from the whimsical – such as Mayo’s cat – to Pasmore’s declaration of his new, constructivist intent. Lucas and Byng Stamper’s own preference focussed firmly on the Francophile, Bloomsbury-influenced post-impressionism that was evidenced in Lucas’s own work and in their first publication in 1945, and it was this, if anything, that was the dominant aesthetic of the exhibition (Figure 13).<sup>129</sup> Thus, while colour lithography was pitched as a modernising turn away from the small, black and white intaglio print fashionable in the first three decades of the century, the exhibition nonetheless emphasised a style rooted in much the same period (and though that had once offered a challenge to established British taste, it was now widely accepted through the influence of Bloomsbury). Smith, Grant and Bell were the senior artists in this tendency, though it was apparent through much else: in the intimism of Edwin La Dell’s domestic interiors, for example, and the presence of Paris-trained artists such as McGuinness, Elsie Few and Lucas herself. A single work by an overseas artist was listed in the catalogue, Pierre-Eugène Clairin’s lithograph *Nue*, which came from Lucas’s own collection and was not for sale, seemingly offered instead as a model of good practice.<sup>130</sup> Such French connections aligned neatly with the exhibition’s positioning of colour lithography as a prestige practice. As noted above, the French lithographic tradition

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<sup>129</sup> The 1948 exhibition also included work by a handful of artists from elsewhere on the continent who had arrived in Britain as exiles, suggesting an interest in their art and/ or their welfare from the sisters and the Redfern (these were Feibusch, Adler, Henry Sanders (Helmut Salomon), Eva Najman and J. Deliss).

<sup>130</sup> No date for *Nue* is given in the catalogue; an impression of a 1948 work by Clarin with the same title is held by the Victoria and Albert Museum (CIRC.521-1948). Clarin was born in 1897 and achieved a significant reputation in the interwar period, including ten years spent at Pont-Aven.

provided a reputable antecedent for British work, as did the tendency for these French lithographers to be established painters, in line with the Miller's Press model. In 1949, the idea of a French exemplar was taken a stage further, with new British prints shown at the Redfern Gallery alongside French works, many slightly older, and all under the exhibition title of *Les Peintres-Graveurs*.<sup>131</sup>

However, if a Bloomsbury-oriented aesthetic was prominent, the size of the exhibition, and the lack of a common theme beyond the print medium, meant that other tendencies were also well represented. In particular the show included a substantial contingent associated with Neo-Romanticism, the somewhat diffuse trend among younger British artists that had been christened by Raymond Mortimer in 1942 and already, in 1948 itself, condemned by Geoffrey Grigson as parochial and naïve.<sup>132</sup> From among the movement's key personnel, John Piper, Graham Sutherland, John Minton, Michael Ayrton, Robert Colquhoun and Prunella Clough were all represented, while the spiky vegetation and winding path of Bryan Wynter's *Landscape with Xerophyte* demonstrated his brief Neo-Romantic affiliation (Figure 14).<sup>133</sup> There was, though, limited evidence of any shared programme in these artists' works in the display, indicative of their initial diversity and increasing divergence but also illustrating the exhibition's tendency towards miscellany.

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<sup>131</sup> As noted above, this show was not held under the Society of London Painter-Printers banner, though Miller's Press contributed. A French emphasis would have appealed to the Redfern Gallery, given its own reliance on retailing nineteenth-century French art to compensate for losses on contemporary material (Garlake, *New Art, New World*, 25).

<sup>132</sup> Malcom Yorke, *The Spirit of Place: Nine Neo-Romantic Artists and their times*, London: Constable, 1988, 22; Garlake, *New Art, New World*, 92.

<sup>133</sup> The listed artists plus Paul Nash make up seven of Malcom Yorke's nine core Neo-Romantics (Yorke, *The Spirit of Place*). Wynter had his first solo show at the Redfern in 1947 and the gallery seems, again, to have utilised the 1948 exhibition as a useful way to promote one of its artists.

Piper recapitulated his interest in the atmosphere of old churches. Colquhoun, by way of contrast, showed hieratic folk figures in shallow spaces, several closely related to earlier compositions in oil.<sup>134</sup> Sutherland had three works in the exhibition: a poetry illustration from 1943 and two new lithographs (presumably transfer prints).<sup>135</sup> *Turning Form* (used for the catalogue cover) continued his exploration of details of vegetation, transformed into semi-abstract shapes and set against indeterminate backgrounds, which had been started in the war – though in the lithograph he places greater emphasis on detail in the drawing.<sup>136</sup> *Maize*, the second of these lithographs, was a more readable rendering of vegetation, as the title implied, though the plant motif was still subject to a symbolic reimagining, in the way that Sutherland had made typical of Neo-Romanticism (Figure 15). While the picture suggested a garden setting – with fence and trellis – the maize plants themselves offered menace as much as produce, with scythe-like leaves, a central cob that sprouted a crown of thorns, and an insistent, top-heavy, verticality which looked forward to Sutherland's later paintings of standing forms. That Prunella Clough chose a similar, unusual subject for one of her prints, *Sweet Corn* (a still life of two cobs against a black background) seems likely to have been a coincidence (Figure 16). Clough's picture suggested a close attention to the object and its structure, if not its detail, a point emphasised by its overtly drawn, sketchy character. The mass of the cobs was formed by bare paper, the shapes appearing to be

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<sup>134</sup> Colquhoun was a beneficiary of the Miller's sisters' patronage and a major presence in the 1948 exhibition, showing five lithographs and five monotypes; for his relationship with the sisters see Crook, *The Ladies*, 38-39. For an example of the derivation of lithograph from oil painting compare *Trinket-Seller* with *The Whistle Seller* (1945) illustrated in Patrick Elliott, *The Two Roberts: Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde*, Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 2014, 39.

<sup>135</sup> Sutherland had started his career as an etcher during the pre-war etching boom and only subsequently turned primarily to painting (Yorke, *The Spirit of Place*, 106 – 115); he had also contributed to *Contemporary Lithographs* first series in 1937.

<sup>136</sup> Compare, for example, Tate's *Green Tree Form: Interior of Woods* (1940).

pulled from the surrounding, heavily inked darkness in an approach that indicated Clough's interest in exploring the expressive possibilities of lithography (a stance also implied by her use of her own press).

The angular, guarded quality of both Sutherland's maize and Clough's sweetcorn might have been taken to hint at an unspecific apprehension. Certainly, both pictures are some way from the bright, fancy-free colour lithographs celebrated in contemporary commentary. However, if this mood links to immediate social or political concerns, the connection is deeply hidden.<sup>137</sup> In depicting a relatively exotic, imported foodstuff, for example (and the cultivation of maize was not yet a commonplace in Britain), both artists subsumed any consideration of food rationing or import constraints to a concern for the subject's visual structure and broad symbolic possibilities.<sup>138</sup> In this, the two works seem to have been typical of *Colour-Prints by the Society of London Painter-Printers* more widely. From images (where these can be found, and including those discussed in this section) and titles (where they can't), it is clear that neither war nor reconstruction were a strong presence on the walls of the Redfern Gallery.<sup>139</sup> Given the uncertain state of British art, still readjusting after six years of isolation and mobilisation, the innovative use of transfer paper by the Millers' Press to attract a range of painters resulted in a set of works that was diverse but largely unmoored from the emerging social and aesthetic concerns of the post-war

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<sup>137</sup> For apprehension as a feature of British art at this moment see Carol Jacobi, "'A Kind of Cold War Feeling'" in *British Art, 1945 – 1952*, Catherine Jolivet (ed.), *British Art in the Nuclear Age*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2014.

<sup>138</sup> For maize cultivation see 'A maize boom turns the English countryside green in every sense', the *Economist*, 16<sup>th</sup> September 2017, <https://www.economist.com/britain/2017/09/16/a-maize-boom-turns-the-english-countryside-green-in-every-sense>, accessed 19<sup>th</sup> November 18.

<sup>139</sup> As the one exception, Colynne Boivie exhibited a work titled, 'Post-War Beach'.



moment. In this there was a contrast to the print images produced in other contexts that I discuss later in this chapter and those that follow. The tendency was also exacerbated by the sisters' adherence to a French-oriented post-impressionism, both as a personal taste and a means to establish lithography as a prestige form, that looked back to the visual and cultural concerns of the earlier twentieth century, despite the utterly changed context.

While the Miller's Press approach to print publishing was designed to attract painters new to lithography, Clive Bell's assertion that very few of those exhibited in 1948 had previously sampled 'this delightful craft' overstated the case. Many participants, including painters with significant reputations, had at least some experience with the medium and often via large-edition, popular series. Some had been commissioned by Contemporary Lithographs before the war or had participated in the *Everyman Prints*, published at its outset, while others had contributed to the existing post-war series published by School Prints or Lyons.<sup>140</sup> Moreover, among those shown at the Society for London Painter-Printers were some artists who were, in fact, known primarily as lithographers and illustrators, such as Lynton Lamb and Clarke Hutton.<sup>141</sup> Bell's decision to ignore these precedents was in part, no doubt, about puffing the originality of the Redfern

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<sup>140</sup> Contributors to *Contemporary Lithographs* among those showing in 1948 were John Aldridge, Edward Ardizzone, Vanessa Bell, Grant, Lynton Lamb, Norah McGuinness and Sutherland as well as John Piper, co-founder of the company; contributors to the Artists' International Association *Everyman Prints* were Bell, Piper, Peter Barker Miller and Russell Reeve; contributors to the 1946 and 1947 School Prints series were La Dell, Reeve, Hans Feibusch, Clarke Hutton, Charles Mozley and Michael Rothenstein; the 1947 Lyons Lithographs contained works by Ardizzone, Grant, Edwin La Dell and William Scott.

<sup>141</sup> In addition, among the younger artists exhibited were pupils of these lithographers: Eva Najman was taught by Hutton, Henry Sanders by Russell Reeve. Bell also passes over the number of exhibitors with connections to printmaking more widely; for example Ronald Grierson and Eileen Mayo both had associations with the Grovesnor School.

Gallery exhibition. However, it also suggests some desire by the organisers to distance its content from other contemporary conceptions of lithography and, in particular from these large, popular editions that were sold outside the fine-art gallery and with an overt commitment to democratisation (or even, in the case of the *Everyman Prints*, to political activism). In Bell's rhetoric, engagement with these forms simply did not count. This is not to say, on the other hand, that those involved with the Society of London Painter-Printers did not also promote the relative affordability of lithographs. Even Bell's catalogue introduction suggested that contemporary prints were an option for 'impecunious picture-lovers', while Philip James' piece for the following year's *Les Peintres-Graveurs* described the 1949 exhibition as forming a 'poor man's art gallery'. However, they did so from within the context of a gallery in London's West End, the traditional location of prestige art sales, and with no suggestion of promoting fundamental changes to the operation of the art market.<sup>142</sup>

### **Within 'reach of the slenderest purse': the large-edition lithograph series**

The language of Bell and James quoted at the end of the last section was typical. If there was one idea consistently attached to prints in post-war commentary it was that they represented an inexpensive route to art ownership: 'One thing all these pictures have in common', the *Manchester Guardian* declared of a show in 1949, is that 'they are cheap'.<sup>143</sup> It was a notion particularly, but by no means exclusively, applied to lithographs. As late as

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<sup>142</sup> Bell, 'The Society of London Painter-Printers', unpaginated; Philip James, 'Foreword', *Les Peintres-Graveurs*, unpaginated.

<sup>143</sup> The *Manchester Guardian*, 24<sup>th</sup> March 1949, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/16/1 (I have not been able to locate this article within the *Guardian* electronic archive). The quotation is from a review of the AIA's *Artists Under Thirty*; lithographs were the focus of the review, though not all pictures in the exhibition were prints. See Appendix 2 for data on pricing and affordability relative to incomes and the cost of comparable items.

1957, Pierre Rouve gave it emphasis, and a political edge, with an extended metaphor that compared the medium to the Labour Party and that was sympathetic if not entirely flattering: ‘Lithographs are the Labour Party of the world of art ... They aim at the co-operation between art and craft and spur the evolution towards that Great Day when the beautiful will not be by definition unobtainable.’<sup>144</sup> A related (and similarly repeated) trope was that these low prices meant that prints were bought by ‘the poor’. Philip James’ description of *Les Peintres-Graveurs* as a ‘poor man’s art gallery’ has already been cited and almost identical language cropped up repeatedly. The *Times*, for example, headlined a review of three lithograph exhibitions in 1952 as ‘Poor Man’s Pictures’ (though in a contrasting tone then stressed that they appealed ‘to persons of the highest sophistication’).<sup>145</sup> The ubiquity of such language, and its evident lack of literal accuracy, raises a number of questions.<sup>146</sup> Where had it arisen? Did it impact on the images created by printmakers? Who did such language seek to target and who, in reality, bought prints in the period?

These questions inform the rest of this chapter. The current section examines the history of the popular, large-edition lithograph series and in doing so it traces the origin of the post-war discourse of cheap prints back to activities of the 1930s. The section that follows then looks at images from one such popular edition – the Lyons series of 1947 –

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<sup>144</sup> Pierre Rouve, ‘Art Equality, *Art News and Review*, 21<sup>st</sup> December 1957, 2. Rouve was reviewing an exhibition of international lithographs at the Hanover Gallery (‘a kind of visual Blackpool conference’). Rouve’s tone is difficult to pin down: the Labour Party had lost two elections and Rouve uses terms such as ‘minor craft’; however he concludes that the Hanover review offers ‘Art with a capital A’.

<sup>145</sup> ‘Poor Man’s Pictures’, the *Times*, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1952, 8. The three exhibitions were ‘Contemporary French and English Lithographs’ at the Redfern Gallery, the Senefelder Club annual exhibition at the AIA Gallery, and an exhibition of ‘French masters’, including Toulouse-Lautrec and Vuillard, at the Marlborough Galleries.

<sup>146</sup> For more detail on pricing and affordability see Appendix 2.

considering them in the context of their audience. In the case of these popular series, the explicit aim of affordability underpinned the whole approach to publication, with the easy replicability of lithography utilised to produce large editions as the basis for low prices. Nonetheless, as the quotations above have shown, the language of cheap prints was also applied to limited editions (in varied media) sold through fine-art galleries. The latter were promoted, somewhat ambiguously, as a prestige form but also as an affordable one. The final section of this chapter considers the audience – both intended and actual – for prints of all kinds in the period and the implications this had for their status.

The idea of prints as a means to democratise art ownership was not a novel one. As noted in the *Introduction*, reproductive work had been embraced for this end across the nineteenth century, while Claude Flight had promoted the affordability of original linocuts in the late 1920s. However, the dominant printmaking tradition of the interwar years was based on a different premise. During this time, with etching the dominant print medium, retailers shaped the market with the express aim of maximising prices. Supply was constrained through strictly limited editions and exclusive offers, while demand was stoked by building a cadre of dedicated print collectors drawn from the professional middle class, with prints aimed at the portfolio more than the wall; speculative investment meant that prices in the secondary market were often higher than at initial sale.<sup>147</sup> As noted, the

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<sup>147</sup> Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking.*, 12-15; also see David Maskill, 'Impressions of a Print Dealer: Harold Wright and the Etching Boom', *Print Quarterly*, 35:3, September 2018. Carey and Griffiths note that prices to subscribers peaked at 75 guineas for *Venetian Nights* by James McBey from Conalghi in 1930, though the print did not sell successfully.

Senefelder Club adopted similar techniques in marketing lithographs, preferring limited editions sold to collectors. In the later 1930s, however, a different idea of the lithograph began to challenge the model of the prestige print. This saw their suitability for high-volume reproduction (and their potential for colour) not as something in need of control but as an opportunity to serve the progressive political goal of widened art ownership.<sup>148</sup> It was a conception that first arose in the US and was associated with the politics and activities of the New Deal. Holger Cahill, national director of the New Deal's Federal Arts Project (FAP) oversaw the first 'Prints for the People' exhibition in 1937, and, in language that was soon to cross the Atlantic, celebrated the way that prints were moving 'out of the precious portfolio and into the intimate environment of the home' thanks to editions 'at prices within the range of the average purse'; It was also the FAP in New York which pioneered the use of colour in American lithographs.<sup>149</sup> In its immediate antecedents, the language of democratisation that marked print commentary in the post-war years was thus associated specifically with lithography and its ubiquity can be seen to result from the new dominance of that medium. Indeed, the American model of affordable lithographs had already found equivalents in Britain by the outbreak of war, providing the models that most directly influenced conceptions after 1945. The next few paragraphs, therefore, look at these earlier

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<sup>148</sup> As with other available colour printing methods, separate plates had to be prepared for each colour; however, the relative ease of drawing onto the plate with lithographic media (as against cutting it away) made such work physically easier (the same point held for preparation of a relatively large plate, giving a size suitable for the wall). Lithography's potential for long print runs stems from the lack of wear to plates in a relatively low-pressure press and the ease of mechanisation through an off-set approach (see Appendix One).

<sup>149</sup> Cahill quoted in Victoria Grieve, *The Federal Art Project and the Creation of Middlebrow Culture*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009, 106; for colour lithography see Clinton Adams, *American Lithographers 1900 – 1960*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983, 123. Commercial publishers also played a role; Adams has noted how lithographic publications 'were based not solely in economic motives ... but also in a political philosophy which, as a matter of principle, advocated large editions and low prices' (ibid., 146 – 47). 'Prints for the People' rhetoric can be misleading; Grieve notes that the expanded market was constituted by the 'middle class', a theme repeated in Britain, as noted below (*The Federal Art Project.*, 106 – 09, 157, 176).

activities in more detail, particularly the AIA's *Everyman Prints*, and make the argument that they bequeathed a rhetoric associating lithographs with political radicalism but also a reality in which democratising activities oriented primarily to an expanded middle-class market.

The AIA had been founded in 1933 as a political organisation through which left-aligned artists could support anti-fascist causes and express a commitment to activism through art and, from the middle of the decade, it had delivered activities intended to place art in front of new, popular audiences.<sup>150</sup> There were two, conjoined elements to this democratising policy: taking art to the people through travelling exhibitions in innovative locations and opening-up the potential to own art by selling prints at low prices. For example, *Britain Today, Cross Section*, an exhibition of graphic art with works available to buy, toured from January 1939 after a launch in East London.<sup>151</sup> Alongside it, an anonymous AIA author rehearsed the view that printmaking was the site of an emerging synergy between an affordable art and everyday subject matter. The exhibition gave expression to 'the growing tendency among artists to turn to contemporary life for their inspiration and to a new and wider public for their appreciation'; the writer continued:

The sources of their inspiration compel them, through their work, to comment upon social and political aspects of life in Britain today. This tendency is particularly notable amongst lithographers and graphic artists generally and prints, reproduced without loss

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<sup>150</sup> In its initial incarnation as the Artists International, the organisation had been close to the Communist Party; however, it had broadened its base with a new statement of mission in 1935: 'The AIA stands for Unity of artists against Fascism and War and the Suppression of Culture' (Radford, *Art for a Purpose*, 42). This popular front approach along with the deteriorating situation on the continent saw the size and status of AIA membership increase.

<sup>151</sup> Radford, *Art for a Purpose*, 119.

of value as originals and saleable at low cost, are more likely to reach a wider public than easel pictures'<sup>152</sup>

There was a missionary zeal to this description but its terms ('a wide public' rather than the working class) were notably restrained. Later in the same year, the AIA planned a second print exhibition, *Britain Today, Weekends and Sundays*. Important changes were made to realise its democratising aims more thoroughly. All the works were to be lithographs, with a standard sized zinc plate provided to participants and impressions machine printed in an unlimited edition by the AIA Voluntary Printing Unit. Prices were also standardised and reduced markedly: forty-two prints were available in black and white at £0/1/0d and nine in two colours at £0/1/6d.<sup>153</sup> The new venture had become, in effect, the publication of a large-edition print series. Its launch was planned for the Museum of Modern Art, New York but this was frustrated by the outbreak of war and the series went on sale in Britain in January 1940 with the revised, symbolic title of the *AIA Everyman Prints* (Figure 17).<sup>154</sup> Simultaneous exhibitions were held in London, Bristol and Durham, with a subsequent tour of smaller towns, including Luton, Winchester and mid-Rhondda.<sup>155</sup> The launch event in London was addressed by Kenneth Clark who praised how the search for a wider audience

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<sup>152</sup> Quoted in Antony Griffiths, 'Prints of the AIA: Attitudes to Lithography in Britain, 1938-51', the *Tamarind Papers*, 14, 1991-92, 57-69, 58. Griffiths' article provides a detailed account of the origin of the *Everyman Prints*.

<sup>153</sup> Griffiths, 'Prints of the AIA', 58; Lynda Morris and Robert Radford, *AIA: The story of the Artists International Association 1933-1953*, Oxford: MoMA Oxford, 1983, 56; Radford, *Art for a Purpose* 120. Speculatively, the preponderance of black and white works is likely to reflect the desire to minimise price and, perhaps, the tradition of satirical lithographs with which key artists such as James Boswell were involved.

<sup>154</sup> Griffiths, 'Prints of the AIA', 58. A full listing of artists involved is in Robin Garton (ed.), *British Printmakers*, 318; participants included Vanessa Bell, Kenneth Rowntree, William Townsend, Carel Weight and John Piper. Several artists abandoned the leisure theme for depictions of the home front; shared national concerns also largely displaced political content, though the series included Boswell's 'Hunger Marchers in Hyde Park' and 'Candidate for Glory' and Clifford Rowe's 'Unemployment Assessment Board'.

<sup>155</sup> Exhibition utilised community spaces such as 'municipal art galleries, schools, centres of adult education' (Percy Horton, 'Art for Everyman', the *Studio*, 119, January-June 1940, 162); see also Radford, *Art for a Purpose*, 120.

was reinstating ‘the representation of the passing scene’ and making art ‘a little less high hat’, a reprise of the theme of the anonymous AIA reviewer of *Britain Today, Cross Section*.<sup>156</sup>

The democratisation of art ownership was front and centre in the publicity material the AIA used to present the series to its potential audience. The short text in the accompanying brochure opened as follows.

*AIA Everyman Prints* are intended for every home. To-day, thanks to cheap production of books and gramophone records, everyone can cultivate a personal taste in what they read and what music they hear. Everyman Prints now widen the range from which the visual taste can be gratified, by offering the direct work of living artists at a price so reasonable that the outlay need not involve anxious consideration, and the collecting of prints is now within the possibilities of every purse. ... The proven demand for inexpensive books, picture magazines and gramophone records of high quality is the best guarantee that *Everyman Prints* will supply a real need in the modern home.<sup>157</sup>

What came across here was not, however, a strong notion of art being liberated for the masses, despite talk of works being suitable for ‘every home’ and ‘every purse’. Rather the sense was of a sales pitch aimed squarely at a certain type of sophisticated consumer: one who already bought cultural products and who was flattered by the idea of possessing a

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<sup>156</sup> Quoted in Horton, ‘Art for Everyman’, 160. Clark was then Director of the National Gallery.

<sup>157</sup> Reprinted in Morris and Radford, *The AIA*, 56. There is a striking similarity with the language of Holger Cahill, quoted above, and how far the AIA was aware of the US model is moot. Griffiths cites suggestive evidence that the AIA were aware of these activities, principally via the American Artists’ Congress (‘Prints of the AIA’, 60).



discriminating ‘personal taste’ and of living in a ‘modern home’. While a publishing revolution had produced ‘inexpensive books’ after the formation of Penguin in 1935 these were firmly associated with an educated readership.<sup>158</sup> Moreover, ownership was a central part of the offer put forward. The art would be experienced in the purchaser’s own domestic setting and as an adjunct to other examples of their personal-but-contemporary taste.<sup>159</sup> A different tone was evinced in an article on the series for the *Studio* by Percy Horton, a founder member of the AIA. In a vignette of the exhibition in Bristol, Horton lauded the independent judgement of working-class buyers and castigated the tame taste of an ‘uninformed middle-class’.<sup>160</sup> However, his description of the ‘considerable’ numbers of the latter appears as a tacit admission of their prominence among the Bristol buyers. Moreover, when the AIA innovated in the distribution of the series by selling impressions over the counter at selected Marks and Spencer’s stores, it widened options beyond traditional art or print outlets but to a favoured retail venue of the more comfortably situated.<sup>161</sup> Thus, while aspects of the AIA’s rhetoric emphasised a strong notion of democratisation, congruent with its wider politics, its practical activity conceived the audience as much in terms of the middle-class, and in particular a cultured and modern-minded section of it.

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<sup>158</sup> Alan Lane, Penguin’s founder, has been described as ‘a man of middlebrow tastes’ who ‘published books for people like himself’ (John Feather, *A History of British Publishing*, London, 1988, 210).

<sup>159</sup> This necessitated a stress on the validity of the prints as original artworks: ‘Everyman prints are not reproductions. ... The Everyman Print owner, therefore, need not fear that his chosen prints will be on every wall’, accompanied by the disingenuous claim, given these were lithographs, that ‘The life of a plate is limited; at the first sign of wear the edition will be closed’.

<sup>160</sup> Percy Horton, ‘Art for Everyman’, 160.

<sup>161</sup> See Judi Bevan, *The Rise and Fall of Marks and Spencer*: ‘Marks and Spencer had its share of middle- or even upper middle-class customers, particularly after Queen Mary’s ground breaking visit in 1932’ (London: Profile Books, 2007, 30). Sales through Department stores were also a feature of American publications (Grieve, *The Federal Art Project*, 109).

This approach drew the series somewhat closer to the other significant pre-war scheme for popular prints, Contemporary Lithographs. Contemporary Lithographs mission was also one of extending access to the market but more overtly in terms of serving a wider segment of the middle class. Jan Gordon, reflecting on the venture in the *Penrose Annual*, described the prints as destined for the ‘middle-class home’, while an accompanying prospectus indicated that the prints were intended to fill a gap for those with yearly incomes between £300 and £1,500, a demographic that it saw as ill-served by the existing art market where paintings cost £10 at a minimum.<sup>162</sup> While significantly more affordable than this (at £1/5/0d), these prints were, however, significantly more expensive than the extremely cheap AIA impressions (as well as being in full colour and a somewhat larger format).<sup>163</sup> Indeed, Antony Griffiths has suggested that the very cheapness of the *Everyman Prints* was a central factor in their limited commercial success; not only was the quality no better than a photo-mechanically reproduced poster, but framing would cost significantly more than the impression itself.<sup>164</sup> The implication is that there was a mismatch between, on the one hand, the AIA’s very low pricing designed to maximise affordability, and, on the other, the expectations of an artwork among those who comprised a plausible audience and at whom the AIA’s marketing was pitched, and the result was disappointing sales.

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<sup>162</sup> Jan Gordon, ‘Contemporary Lithographs’, *Penrose Annual*, 41, 1939, 47; Griffiths, ‘Contemporary Lithographs Ltd’, 399. As noted earlier, Contemporary Lithographs first series was targeted at schools in the first instance. Carey and Griffiths give an unsourced quotation stating the second series was aimed at ‘households with small incomes’ (*Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 18); this was relative.

<sup>163</sup> Griffiths, ‘Contemporary Lithographs Ltd’, 399. The edition size for both series was in-principle unlimited but in-practice capped at 400 (*ibid.*, 400, n.28).

<sup>164</sup> Griffiths, ‘Prints of the AIA’, 59; Morris and Radford, *AIA*, 58. Griffiths notes that while sales at the opening exhibition were brisk, evidence suggests that by 1943 total sales had not risen beyond 5,000.

As colour lithography came to prominence in the post-war era, an association with radical democratising activity was thus part of its heritage though so, too, were practical initiatives aimed primarily at the middle-income buyer. As noted in the *Introduction*, endorsement of the *Everyman Prints* by the Dartington Hall *Arts Enquiry* provided a bridge from these earlier initiatives to the post-1945 era of “Art for All”, in Bryan Robertson’s characterisation, and further large-edition lithographs became a notable feature of the printmaking field. School Prints Limited issued its first series in 1946, followed by that from the catering company J. Lyons and Co. Ltd the next year (images from the latter are the subject of the following section). School Prints published further series in 1947, 1949 (featuring continental artists along with Henry Moore) and 1951 (produced in association with the AIA and discussed in *Chapter Two*) and Lyons further series in 1951 and 1955; a coda came with the two series published by the brewer Guinness in 1956 and 1962.<sup>165</sup> Each series comprised prints by a range of professional artists but impressions were unsigned (or signed in the plate) and unnumbered and all were also sold directly to the public by the publisher. As the name implies, School Prints’ primary market was education authorities, but across these series the accompanying rhetoric of democratisation was inherited unchanged from the 1930s, even as the politically-committed context provided by the AIA was replaced by a variety of commercial publishers. Thus, the catalogue for Lyons’ second series in 1951 boasted that the prints were available to the ‘slenderest purse’, a new variant on ‘every purse’ from the *Everyman Prints* brochure and, indeed, Holger Cahill’s ‘average

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<sup>165</sup> See Ruth Artmonsky, *The School Prints: A Romantic Project*, Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collectors’ Club, 2010; Batchelor, *Tea and a Slice of Art*; Emma Mason, *Who? Where? When? The Story the Guinness Lithographs*, Eastbourne: Bread and Butter Press, 2016.

purse' (and at £0/15/9d for the larger format they were slightly cheaper than the Contemporary Lithographs over a decade earlier).<sup>166</sup>

There is an absence of direct evidence about who, in fact, purchased impressions from these series but, in accordance with the inheritance from the 1930s, radical claims about affordability coexisted with a more aspirational language. A Lyons press release in 1951, for example, talked of 'distinguished works of art at the economic price that the lithographic process affords'.<sup>167</sup> Their commercial success is also hard to judge. Looking at the example of Lyons, the company hinted at the success of its first series when launching the second with an exhibition that was itself deemed a 'great success'.<sup>168</sup> Clifford Frith, an artist in the first and third series, believed that Lyons must have 'sold an enormous number of prints' on the basis of his own royalties and, as noted, *Art News and Review* described the prints as being 'purchased in record numbers'.<sup>169</sup> All these sources require caution, but collectively suggest at least modest sales which held up across the period.

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<sup>166</sup> The phrase is used in James, 'Foreword', *Lithographs by Contemporary Artists*, exhibition catalogue, 1. 'Purse' does not seem to have been a gendered term.

<sup>167</sup> Lyons' teashops, where the prints were displayed, served a wide range of customers from the working and middle class, with a possible accent on working women (see Peter Bird, *The First Food Empire*, Chichester: Phillimore, 2000, 110-11; also Brigid Keane and Olive Portnoy, 'The English Tea Room', Harlan Walker (ed.) *Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 1991*, London: Prospect Books, 1992, 160). The very large size of the lithographs seems likely to have made them unsuitable for many working class homes.

<sup>168</sup> See Gabriel White to Julian Salmon, 12<sup>th</sup> September 1951, V&A Archive, ACGB/121/621; though a line in a draft 1951 brochure stating that the 1947 series had sold out was deleted by Lyons. Paul Rennie states that one of Lyons' three series was later listed as sold out, but interprets this as evidence of modest demand ('The Poster Print', Garton (ed.), *British Printmakers*, 276).

<sup>169</sup> Batchelor, *Tea and a Slice of Art*, 52. Lyons' withdrawal from publication after 1955 may have been due to challenges in their teashop business, rather than falling print sales per se. School Prints' first two series were successful enough to proceed with a third, but the high costs and low sales to schools resulting from this series' focus on works by major European Modernists precluded further independent activity.

***Sixteen Lithographs by Contemporary Artists Published by J. Lyons and Co. Ltd, 1947***

Reflecting on the first series of lithographs that Lyons produced in 1947, Nicolas Bentley suggested that a question had been raised but not yet answered; it remained to be seen how ‘the enforced contemplation of modern art will affect the metabolism of the eating public’.<sup>170</sup> The initial impetus for Lyons’ scheme was the need to refresh its café interiors while decorating supplies remained short. From the outset, however, prints were also sold to the public, via an order form held at its establishments. Though gently mocked by Bentley as ‘enforced contemplation’, the result, whether in a teashop or the purchaser’s home, would be the kind of everyday encounter with art that was sought by promoters of colour lithographs as a popular art form. In this section, I turn attention to specific images published in Lyons’ first series, taking this as an example of the popular, large-edition lithograph series. I consider what kind of visual encounter these prints offered and what expectations they had of their audience.

The institutional context from which the Lyons lithographs emerged was, of course, very different to that of the *Everyman Prints*. Replacing the left-wing AIA as publisher was a family-controlled business which incorporated hotels and restaurants as well as teashops and London ‘Cornerhouses’.<sup>171</sup> Nonetheless, Lyons positioned publication of the prints as an act of public benefit, both in terms of patronage to artists and bringing art to a new audience. In an introduction to the brochure for the first series, James Laver utilised the

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<sup>170</sup> Nicolas Bentley, ‘Lithographs for Lyons’, *Alphabet and Image*, 6, January 1948, 54.

<sup>171</sup> In the 1930s Lyons had had a dominant market position, but it struggled with wartime conversion to self-service and the imposition of meal orders, that continued to 1950 (Bird, *The First Food Empire*, 189-91).

familiar language of democratisation, praising the ‘reasonable price’ of works in ‘this real picture gallery for Everyman’.<sup>172</sup>

This first series comprised single works by sixteen artists who were selected by Jack Beddington, the series’ creative director.<sup>173</sup> No parameters were set for style or subject matter, though Beddington preferred the accessible and there seems to have been some oversight as artists worked up designs.<sup>174</sup> Across the series, familiar genre were to the fore in, for example, Duncan Grant’s *Still Life* (Figure 18) and the urban topography of L.S. Lowry’s *Industrial Scene* or Carel Weight’s *Albert Bridge*. Nonetheless, the prints encompassed considerable stylistic diversity, ranging from the loosely handled realism of Ruskin Spear’s *Billiards Saloon* (Figure 19) to the art deco style patterning of John Nash’s *Landscape with Bathers* or the shallow-space and simplification of William Scott’s *The Bird Cage* (Figure 20).<sup>175</sup> As with the following year’s Society of London Painter-Printers exhibition, and in part through an overlap in personnel, a French influence touched several of the pictures. As at the Redfern Gallery, this looked back to what were, by 1947, familiar reference points: Cezanne for Grant; Raoul Dufy for John Lake’s *Les Lecques Bay*; and the Nabis, for La Dell’s

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<sup>172</sup> *Sixteen Lithographs by Contemporary Artists Published by J. Lyons and Co. Ltd with a foreword by James Laver*, V&A Archive, ACGB/121/621. Laver was Keeper of Prints, Drawings and Paintings for the Victoria and Albert Museum from 1938 to 1959.

<sup>173</sup> The prints were published in an edition of 1,500 with printing by the commercial company Chromoworks Ltd; seven were autolithographs (i.e. drawn on the plate by the artist, see Appendix 3) the rest being transcribed by craftsmen at the printers (Batchelor, *Tea and a Slice of Art*, 27). The autolithographers were Ardizzone, Bawden, Freedman, Gross, La Dell, John Nash and Scott (G.S. Whittet, ‘Teashop Lithographs’, 71). Beddington had masterminded the innovative publicity of Shell-Mex in the 1930s and worked for Lyons as a consultant (Batchelor, *Tea and a Slice of Art*, 28 – 29).

<sup>174</sup> George Hooper was asked to remove beer glasses from *Hotel Entrance* as these were felt inappropriate for a teashop setting (ibid., 44 and 47). The two later Lyons series had explicit themes, of British scenes and landscape respectively (ibid., 100 and 134).

<sup>175</sup> The latter’s absence of obvious technical skill led to mild aversion from some teashop customers, though ironically Scott was among the autolithographers (ibid., 50).

*Hastings* (Figure 21). On the other hand, there was little evidence in the series of the avant-garde movements which had been active ahead of the war. Abstraction remained in abeyance in Britain (Pasmore's conversion to constructivism notwithstanding) while the British surrealist movement had largely dissipated by 1939, though Anthony Gross's *Herne Bay Pier* for Lyons echoed its playful spirit in an anarchic use of line (Figure 22).<sup>176</sup> Moreover, Beddington's selection favoured representational artists anyway, continuing support for a number who had previously been commissioned by the War Artists Advisory Committee.<sup>177</sup> Figuration was thus a presence in a majority of the prints, often as a source of anecdote, with Edward Ardizzone's *The Railway Station* typical.

The extent to which different images drew on the particular qualities of colour lithography also varied. For the transcribed works of Grant and Lowry, the Chromoworks craftsmen proved adept at translating painterly textures, but while this had attractions it also underscored an understanding of the prints as reproductions. In contrast, several of the autolithographers played up the medium's capacity for flat blocks of colour, a capacity which, as noted, was seen by some as making lithography a natural vehicle for a modern interest in surface. This was the case with Scott, but also, for example, Bawden, whose emphasis on contrasting surface pattern and truncated space was smuggled in behind the easy subject matter of *The Dolls at Home*. Gross, on the other hand, constructed his image primarily through a vivacious line, a characteristic of his pre-war etchings.

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<sup>176</sup> Gross's image was amongst the most popular of the set (*ibid.*, 72).

<sup>177</sup> Batchelor notes that William Nicholson was on Beddington's original longlist but not his son Ben, a prominent constructivist (*ibid.*, 49). Ardizzone, Bawden, Freedman, Gross, John Nash, and Weight all held full-time, salaried war artist contracts, other Lyons' artists had been employed part time.

With hindsight, Bentley's description of the series as 'modern' can thus seem surprising – none of the works sat within an explicitly modernist movement and the emphasis on representation, and occasional anecdotal work, appears conservative. In relation to style, however, his comment can be understood in terms of the contrast with more traditional print precedents. There was an absence of the careful modelling and spatial description found in many earlier black and white lithographs, for example by A.S. Hartrick, such qualities replaced by an emphasis on design, whether through colour or line, and an invocation of turn-of-the-century French reference points.<sup>178</sup> The subject of the prints might also suggest an absence of engagement with contemporary concerns, given the prominence of traditional genre and varied landscapes. However, further consideration of specific images suggests a more complex situation.

Several of the subjects chosen for the series might have fitted the theme initially proposed for the *Everyman Prints* in 1939, *Britain Today*, *Weekends and Sundays*, with five of the Lyons images featuring the seaside or bathers. However, only the works by La Dell and Gross suggested a specifically contemporary moment, with figures in modern dress placed in a recognisable British landscape, and in Gross's case the scene was too packed with incident to be understood as representing any visual reality. La Dell's title, *Hastings*, on the other hand, related his picture to a specific place, and the image was indeed a recognisable view from East Hill over Hastings Old Town, with the houses of Tackleway forming the

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<sup>178</sup> See Eileen Mayo's review of Hartrick's memorial exhibition at the Arts Council Gallery, *Art News and Review*, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1951, 4.



middle-ground (Figure 23). La Dell complemented this townscape with an emphasis on figures and in particular the family group in the foreground: the father, strongly indicated in dark clothes; the mother and inquisitive baby; and the young girl exploring the grass. The cultural salience of the family in the period has been well documented by historians of British post-war art; in particular, the emphasis on its reformation and repair as a foundation for reconstruction by the 1945 Labour government has been seen to have manifested itself in contemporary works such as Henry Moore's family groups.<sup>179</sup> La Dell's print could be seen as taking up this theme, though his depiction of a family eschewed generalised symbolism in favour of specific incident – the parents captured in a moment of intimacy with their children.<sup>180</sup>

As a topographical depiction of a well-known, tourist vista, La Dell's picture also had commonalities with John Piper's *Brighton Aquatints* published in 1939 and the Neo-Romantic interest in place and leisure. For its late 1940s audience, however, it would be hard to take such a depiction of Hastings at face value. The south coast of England had been a symbol of both defiance and vulnerability during the war, and these associations persisted. Hastings itself remained visibly scarred by its own wartime experiences. The town had suffered eighty-five bombing raids, with nightly attacks in September and October of 1941, followed by fifteen V1 strikes in the last year of the war (four V1s fell on East Hill, one possible cause of the shallow hollow that surrounds La Dell's family).<sup>181</sup> Hastings's tourist

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<sup>179</sup> See, for example, Garlake, *New Art, New World*, 233 – 236.

<sup>180</sup> In keeping with La Dell's practice at this time, the representation was based on his own family (Elizabeth Mellen, 'Biographical Note', Tom and Maria La Dell (ed.), *Edwin La Dell*, 16).

<sup>181</sup> Mary Haskell Porter, *Hastings in Peace and War 1930 – 1945*, Hastings: Ferndale Press, 2002, 48 – 49.

industry had long catered for a broad social base of customers, but this took time to return to normality. After occupation by the military, the town's guest houses needed renovating and refurbishing for holiday-makers, and a small national scandal emerged over inadequate compensation for landlords.<sup>182</sup> In this context, tensions apparent in La Dell's picture offered a more complex and tougher image than might at first appear. The family's surroundings showed an undamaged town – excepting some tired plasterwork on the houses of Tackleway – able to give an untroubled welcome to visitors. However, that this had a touch of fantasy was emphasised by the almost Mediterranean light and colour (with a mixture of yellow, pink and green tones close to that in Lake's *Les Lecques Bay*). The family itself, on the other hand, was represented as specific and concrete, conveying connotations of hope for the future vested in the children (and the direction of shadow suggests this is morning) but also lived, everyday experience. *Hastings* thus offered the vision of a vulnerable and war-exhausted town returned to former glories through sunlight and pleasure but, simultaneously, via the foreground figures, this reimagining was grounded in current realities that promised much but could not ignore the blustery wind coming off the sea and driving incoming clouds that still threatened a sudden chill.

There were other reminders of recent wartime history within Lyons' first series, and without La Dell's compensating sunshine or family affection. Barnett Freedman was to contribute to each of Lyons' three series and, along with Beddington, was central to their production, being employed as a technical consultant to liaise between the artists and the

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 87.

commercial printers.<sup>183</sup> Each of his lithographs from 1951 and 1955 was, appropriately, a tour de force of technique, his choice of genre traditionally associated with painting throwing emphasis on that mastery; thus, *Music – Still Life*, from 1951, rendered contrasting textures of brass, wood and paper, with overprinting used to create the most subtle tones.<sup>184</sup> Freedman's contribution to the first series, *People*, though technically accomplished, was distinct from these later works in inviting interpretation in terms of dramatic incident (Figure 24). Its pastel colours, lightly drawn faces and slightly elongated figures relate the work to Freedman's earlier *Charade* for *Contemporary Lithographs*. However, while *Charade* played with the uncanny effects of shadow in an intimate, domestic setting, *People*, though naturally lit, had a more unsettling power. That is not to ignore its straightforwardly attractive elements: the smart young women with linked arms who dominate much of the foreground and the various groups to the rear, laden with fruit or calling a greeting. However, the multiple gazes of the foreground characters also gave rise to a dramatic tension that suggested that their diversity might resolve into mutual uncertainty, even suspicion. None of the individuals were shown looking at each other, though several – the woman to the right, the man turning in three-quarter profile, the shawled woman further back – gazed directly forward, their looks tentative rather than challenging; in comparison, the sideward glances of the two women in the foreground could seem evasive. Most arresting, though, were the downcast (perhaps blind) eyes of the

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<sup>183</sup> Batchelor, *Tea and a Slice of Art*, 30 – 31. Freedman was uniquely placed for this role, having both graduated from the RCA Painting School and being trained in lithography by Thomas Griffiths at the Baynard Press. He was a public advocate for the virtues of lithography, stressing its painterly qualities and the low cost of its product, see Pat Gilmour, 'Unsung Heroes: Barnett Freedman', the *Tamarind Papers*, 8:1, Spring 1985.

<sup>184</sup> Intriguingly, Freedman seems to have planned a matching image, *Ceremonial Still Life* for the Coronation Lithographs in 1953, but this was never completed (see Appendix 6).

fiddler. Taking up about a quarter of the picture, this figure was a centre of interest even as he walked out of the scene (and into the space of the viewer). His tired face and battered homburg were carefully modelled and his instrument – both violin and bow – provided a visual marker of his profession that the other figures largely lacked, much like the attribute of a saint in a religious painting. Such relative specificity, however, only emphasised a sense of the musician as a solitary figure, an outcast set slightly apart from the others who mostly formed overlapping couples or groups. While he could thus be understood as a generalised other, he could also, more specifically, be understood as Jewish, given the historical importance of the violin to Jewish culture and the occasional use of the violin as a marker of Jewishness in art (as, for example, in works by Marc Chagall).<sup>185</sup> While a reasonable understanding from the image alone, this interpretation was given added plausibility by a knowledge of Freedman's biography: the artist was the son of Russian-Jewish émigrés who was brought up in the Jewish East End, and he was also a self-taught violinist.<sup>186</sup> Several elements of the composition, including the fiddler, were taken from a pre-war painting, *Street Scene*, which Freedman based on figure studies made across the 1930s.<sup>187</sup> These preliminary drawings were assembled into an imaginary streetscape, emphasising the deliberate, prominent placing of the musician both in the painting and the later lithograph. If the figure's identity as Jewish was accepted, then his separation along with the variety of gazes – downcast, averted or uncertain, already a potential source of unease – took on a

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<sup>185</sup> James A Grymes, *Violins of Hope*, New York: Harper Perennial, 2014, 4 and 10. For Chagall's representation of the Jewish violinist see, amongst others, *The Fiddler* (1913, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam), *The Green Violinist* (1924, Guggenheim, New York).

<sup>186</sup> Barnett Freedman, University of Brighton Design Archives, <http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/collections/design-archives/resources/rdis-at-britain-can-make-it-1946/barnett-freedman>, accessed 13<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

<sup>187</sup> *Street Scene* (1933 – 39) is held at Tate, London (cat. NO5201).

more pointed meaning of complicity or evasion. This was true for the painting, in the context of pre-war anti-semitism, but equally for the lithograph, published just two years on from the full revelation of the holocaust and with British fascists once again active in the East End.<sup>188</sup>

Freedman's was not the only image to carry intimations of Nazi atrocity and its legacy. Mary Kessell was amongst Beddington's early preferences for participation in the series, and, given that she had only graduated from the Central School in 1939, it seems likely that this was on the strength of her work as a commissioned war artist, and hence that Beddington was open to her contributing a work with similar themes.<sup>189</sup> Kessell had been employed by the War Artists Advisory Committee (WAAC) in May 1945, and spent August and September of that year travelling in Germany to document the journey home of surviving Yugoslavs from the British displaced persons facility at Bergen-Belsen, which neighboured the evacuated concentration camp. For her Lyons picture, *The Flight into Egypt*, Kessell chose a traditional Biblical scene which established her picture's authority as well as bringing with it certain visual assumptions (Figure 25). The donkey and haloed infant in the print conformed to expectations, as did the treatment of the parents in the Holy Family, one shown mounted the other on foot as in typical renderings of the subject.

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<sup>188</sup> Stephen Dorril, *Blackshirt: Sir Oswald Mosley & British Fascism*, London: Penguin Books, 2007, 569.

<sup>189</sup> Batchelor, *Tea and a Slice of Art*, 39. For Kessell's short-term contract with the WAAC see Brian Foss, *War Paint: Art, War, State and Identity in Britain 1939-45*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007, 211 n.85 and 144-146. Kessell went on to hold solo shows at the Leicester Galleries from 1950 and created murals and commercial work for ICI, Shell, London Underground and others; she taught Jewellery design at the Central School from 1952 to 1956 and was a visiting teacher at the London School of Printing from 1957 to 1976 (see Buckman, *Artists in Britain since 1945, Vol. 1*, 882). Foss says of Kessell's WAAC sketches, 'they ... say more about the war's dreadfulness and thanatotic anti-humanism than do three square yards of canvas produced by many other artists' (*War Paint*, 146).

However, there was a disconcerting transformation of the figures of Mary and Joseph into children themselves, a change which underscored their vulnerability as they fled Herod's child-massacre.<sup>190</sup> There was a clear, if loose, thematic link between the story of the flight into Egypt and the journeying, persecuted figures, many children, traversing Europe in the aftermath of the war and captured in Kessell's WAAC sketches. Further, though, there was also a specific visual link between the Lyons print and her war work: when Kessell published a memoir of her German experiences in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1946, the accompanying reproductions of her charcoal figure drawings of the refugees used a very similar plain, blue-green background – absencing any topographical detail – to that which was such a strong feature of the Lyons lithograph.<sup>191</sup> The nominally biblical figures were thus placed into the same visual world of suffering and hope as the children in Kessell's contemporary reportage. As with the biographical details which can be brought to bear on Freedman's image, this connection would have been available to only a minority of contemporary viewers. However, again as with *People*, its trace is present within the image itself; by removing any specifying context and replacing it with a plain of abstract colour, the image refuses an easy assimilation of its figures to traditional iconography or half-remembered Sunday school narratives, the Holy Family became the displaced persons of contemporary Europe whose struggles and suffering stretched beyond the end of war into the *Lyons Lithograph's* present.

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<sup>190</sup> Kessell's *Lyons Lithograph* was one of those transcribed by Chromoworks. Passages within the donkey and children are difficult to interpret. This may result from subsequent degradation of inks (Batchelor, *Tea and a Slice of Art*, 76), but may also represent the print's original condition, reflecting either a deliberate archaising effect, a reference to the sketchy bodies of Kessell's war work, or a failure of transcription between the artist and Chromoworks.

<sup>191</sup> Mary Kessell, 'Germany Diary/ August – October, 1945', the *Cornhill Magazine*, 967, April 1946, 58 – 66. The background of the Lyons image is somewhat greener in the copy held by the Victoria and Albert Museum (E.698-1947); this may be due to a tendency for its colours to degrade, but the parallel with the Cornhill images still holds. Kessell's sketch books from Bergen-Belsen also use a plain, monochrome background, though sometimes created with sanguine chalk (Foss, *War Paint*, 146).

The lithographs by La Dell, Freedman and Kessell thus opened themselves to interpretations that engaged with some of the most immediate and difficult issues of the post-war world: the promise and the effort of reconstruction, in the work by La Dell, and the confrontation with the implications of Nazism and total war for our understanding of humanity and ethical action, in those by Freedman and Kessell. It would misrepresent the series not to stress its diversity and a general tendency towards bright colours and holiday scenes. Nonetheless, these three pictures show that its images might also take their broad audience seriously, expecting from the viewer an engagement which reflected on the pictures' content and moved to wider and current concerns.<sup>192</sup> There is an evident contrast between the presence of the recent war and its aftermath in these three examples and the relative absence of these same themes that I noted among the plethora of works displayed at *Colour-Prints by the Society of London Painter-Printers* the following year. Speculatively, one might see this as a result of their different positioning in the art market: Miller's Press and the Redfern Gallery straining to place their works as prestige objects and oriented towards an earlier modernism which largely eschewed social engagement; the Lyons' prints aimed at a wide audience and addressing its more immediate concerns. This would represent a partial fulfilment of the hope, going back to the AIA in the late 1930s, that art for a popular audience would necessarily address social and political concerns. However, in 1947 this was not achieved through the dilute social realism of depicting the 'passing scene',

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<sup>192</sup> On occasion this challenge to the audience ran up against resistance: Kessell's *The Flight into Egypt* seems to have been the least popular of the series with Lyons' staff and customers (Batchelor, *Tea and a Slice of Art*, 49). Batchelor puts this down to the work's 'sketchy' quality. Foss sees the small-scale of Kessell's WAAC work as a contributor to its power (*War Paint*, 146), a power compromised in moving to a large lithographic image.

in Kenneth Clark's phrase, rather it was through deploying the allusive and the symbolic (even in the case of *Hastings*, on first approach one of the more straightforwardly documentary images of the series). Such means, it seems, were those felt adequate to address post-war concerns. The line from popular audience to a broadly political art cannot, though, be drawn too strongly: as noted, the Lyons works are diverse. What can reasonably be claimed is that in this case the large-edition format created a space for images that prompted reflection on such contemporary issues.

In *Chapter Two*, and in the context of the Festival of Britain, I develop a concept of welfare state culture (borrowing and adapting a phrase from Anne Massey). The typical visual art works of this culture were engaged with attempts to broaden access to art, at least modestly, and were consequently popular in style. In addition they carried meanings sympathetic to the post-war Labour government's project of social democratic reconstruction. Of the three works considered here, only La Dell's *Hastings* might seem to meet this last criterion. However, in their address to a broad audience, made in the context of a democratising initiative, and their opening of contemporary concerns in a way that matched the strain of seriousness in post-war culture, all pointed towards this concept. Before turning to prints from the Festival of Britain, however, I conclude this chapter with consideration of a last issue relating to the audience for prints in the immediate post-war moment, looking at how the language and idea of democratisation impacted prints' status.



### The ‘poor man’s picture gallery’: prints’ audience and status

While it was large editions such as the Lyons series that exploited lithography’s reproductive potential in the service of an explicit democratising mission, those fine-art galleries that sold prints, usually as limited editions at a somewhat higher price, also tended to pitch them in terms of ‘ordinary private owners’.<sup>193</sup> Two aspects of retailing activity give a flavour of this. First, prints were often exhibited before Christmas, when tradition dictated a cheaper offer from London galleries. Thus, in December 1956, the *Times* observed somewhat snidely that there ‘is no doubt that the approach of Christmas brings out most of the advantages of printmaking as an art form, even if they are those that are not measured in purely aesthetic terms’.<sup>194</sup> Second, when the Zwemmer Gallery organised a mixed print exhibition in Nottingham, in the following year, the show adopted the inclusive title of *Art for All* (the phrase later used by Bryan Robertson to characterise the spirit of the time).<sup>195</sup> Moreover, commentators troubled by the exclusivity of art ownership could cast commercial galleries’ print exhibitions within the same democratising conception used for large editions, even quite late in the period. Hence, in a review of the first New Editions Group exhibition in 1956, this time at the Zwemmer Gallery’s London premises, an anonymous critic for the *Times* referenced the ‘problem of popular patronage’ and suggested the work of the group in various print media offered ‘at least a partial solution’ – similar wording to that Kenneth

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<sup>193</sup> Graham Hughes, ‘Reproduced Art’, *Art News and Review*, 19<sup>th</sup> March 1955, 3 (a review of *London Group Prints* at the Zwemmer Gallery). Appendix 2 provides example print prices at commercial galleries; Appendix 4 lists some relevant galleries and exhibitions.

<sup>194</sup> ‘Three Exhibitions of Prints’, the *Times*, 13<sup>th</sup> December 1956, 3 (reviewing shows at Zwemmer, Redfern and St George’s Gallery Prints). On the Christmas tradition see John Russell in the *Sunday Times*, 8 December 1957 (Tate Gallery Archive TGA 992/8/6).

<sup>195</sup> It had also been used for a Victoria and Albert Museum exhibition of London Transport posters in 1949.

Clark had used in launching the *Everyman Prints* sixteen years before.<sup>196</sup> A local newspaper preview of Nottingham exhibition, the following year, used the familiar language of pictures ‘within reach of every purse’.<sup>197</sup>

Evidence for who, in fact, bought prints of any kind in the period is limited. Michael Rothenstein’s 1956 piece for *Art News and Review* provides one insight with his statement that ‘Young married couples who subscribe to “House and Garden” or “House Beautiful” are among our [i.e. printmakers] best supporters’.<sup>198</sup> Both these magazines were aimed at a relatively young, principally female, and largely middle class audience for whom money might currently be tight but who saw their taste as modern and sophisticated. Both also ran occasional features on where to buy art on a budget, in which contemporary prints featured as an option (though neither made a distinction between limited and large editions, or between either of these and reproductions).<sup>199</sup> A further suggestion that young professionals were a core demographic comes from two programmes broadcast by BBC television, in 1950 and 1951, on choosing prints for the home, the first covering original

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<sup>196</sup> ‘Promotion of the Colour Print’, the *Times*, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1956, 10. In 1940 Kenneth Clark had said: ‘[the prints] appear to be the first concrete solution to a problem which has always seemed insoluble: how patronage of art by the people could be possible’ (quoted in Horton, ‘Art for Everyman’, 160). For the New Editions Group see Appendix 4.

<sup>197</sup> The *Nottingham Guardian-Journal*, 16 February 1957 (Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 992/8/5). The review stresses that all works in the exhibition were limited editions.

<sup>198</sup> Rothenstein, ‘Prints and Printmaking’, *Arts News and Review*, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1956, 2.

<sup>199</sup> *Home and Garden* pitched for a slightly wealthier audience (advertisers included Liberty, Heals and Harrods), *House Beautiful* for a slightly younger one (using ‘for the younger home maker’ as its strapline). Both carried features explicitly for men, but the balance of advertising and editorial was aimed at women. For advice on art see *House Beautiful*, ‘Time for Pictures’, March 1955, 32-36, ‘*House Beautiful*’s own picture gallery’, July 1958, 36-37 and ‘Pictures for Pence’, September 1957, 58-59 and *House and Garden*, ‘How to buy a picture’, September 1954, 58-59 (an article by John Berger) and ‘Art on a Shoestring’, April 1956, 76-77. In relation to large-edition series, School Prints impressions featured in *House Beautiful*, March 1955, 35 and November 1958, 59.

works, the second reproductions.<sup>200</sup> Only the second survives as a transcript but its participants are likely to be typical of the intended audience for both. These were the Dobbings, a newly married couple where John was a medical student and Rachel a housewife and who had a fondness for trips to France and for art, though with limited expertise.<sup>201</sup> A slightly different inflection emerges from the Arts Council's preparations for *Contemporary British Lithographs*, a 1951 touring and selling exhibition. This was conceived 'to meet the needs of the ordinary general public', and in particular 'the sort that finds its way into public libraries, educational settlements, and so on'.<sup>202</sup> This provincial audience was thus seen as without professional distinction, and perhaps less sophisticated than the Francophile Dobbings, but with a decided orientation towards education and self-improvement.

While varied written sources show democratisation remaining an influential idea across the period, precisely how the extended audience would benefit from exposure to art was rarely articulated. When it was the ambition was modest, stated in terms of visual pleasure rather than moral improvement. Neville Wallis, for example, straightforwardly celebrated the potential of prints (and specifically lithographs) to stimulate the optical sense: 'Contemporary prints have become ever lighter, brighter, more fancy free ... and as decorations in a vestibule or cocktail bar they can refresh the eye at each casual

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<sup>200</sup> *Prints for the Home*, was shown on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1950 and *Masterpieces for Your Home* on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1951 (with works selected from a catalogue produced by UNESCO). The *Radio Times* entry for the former read, 'Paul Reilly, of the Council of Industrial Design, shows new and old prints suitable for home decoration, and offers advice on their selection, framing and hanging'. (*Radio Times*, 1385, 28<sup>th</sup> April 1950, 47).

<sup>201</sup> *Masterpieces for Your Home*, transcript, BBC Television, 15<sup>th</sup> May 1951, BBC Written Archive Centre.

<sup>202</sup> J Wood Palmer to La Dell, 31 Oct 1950, V&A Archive, ACGB/121/185. The Arts Council organised two touring shows with this title in the period, in 1951 and 1952, as well as using it for their Miller's Press exhibition in 1954; the first was organised by Edwin La Dell.

encounter'.<sup>203</sup> In imagining works hung in a (distinctly middle-class) home, Wallis was pursuing another, related, trope: that prints, as affordable objects, could bring art out of the museum and into everyday spaces. Indeed, the ability of prints to take up an 'amiable residence in a family' was a feature commonly invoked across the post-war period, in particular in relation to lithographs.<sup>204</sup>

For many critics, however, prints could never offer more than a consolation for those unable to afford purchases in what one called 'the more serious realms' of art; prints, that is, were strictly for those buyers 'who cannot afford oils or watercolours'.<sup>205</sup> Others writers presented themselves as more sympathetic towards prints' status, but also as swimming against the cultural tide in taking such an attitude. One reviewer of Zwemmer's first New Editions Group exhibition, for example, lamented how prints had 'no serious artistic standing in England' and were viewed by the public as 'a barely respectable compromise with the commercial methods of mass production'.<sup>206</sup> In a thoughtful piece on the same exhibition, Eric Newton similarly began by making explicit a negative valuation of prints that, he implied, was widespread: 'The word "prints" suggests something rather low in

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<sup>203</sup> The *Observer*, 7<sup>th</sup> December 1952, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/16/3. Wallis was reviewing a Senefelder Club exhibition.

<sup>204</sup> *Art News and Review*, review of the New Editions Group exhibition, 1957, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 992/8/6. In the late 1930s Contemporary Lithographs had already asserted that 'We should like to discourage the feeling that good pictures are exclusively museum objects, things that are not produced nowadays' (quoted in Griffiths, 'Contemporary Lithographs Ltd', 399); while the Arts Council was explicit that *British Contemporary Lithographs* (1951) should 'encourage people in the idea that they can buy lithographs for the decoration of their houses' (J Wood Palmer to Edwin La Dell, 31<sup>st</sup> October 1950, V&A Archive, ACG/121/185). This didacticism could chafe: there was a note of complaint in Peter Floud's observation that 'Art-critics, educationalists, and others frequently claim that auto-lithographs are the ideal decoration for the classroom, or the average home, or the hospital ward' ('Some Doubts Concerning Auto-lithography', *Image*, 3, Winter 1949/50, 61).

<sup>205</sup> *Art News and Review*, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1951, 6; the *Scotsman*, 16<sup>th</sup> December 1957, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 992/8/6.

<sup>206</sup> 'Promotion of the Colour Print', the *Times*, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1956, 10.

the scale of the artist's products. It hints at mass production. Not a conveyor belt but some kind of elementary machine seems to intervene between the artist and the rapturous flow of his inspiration'.<sup>207</sup> When authors offered justifications for their own dismissive attitudes, these tended to match Newton's terms; in particular, they appealed to a notion of 'indirectness'. This charge had already been laid against colour lithographs by Jan Gordon in the late 1930s, when he stated that the 'auto-lithograph must be called a semi-direct original'.<sup>208</sup> However, the meaning of the term remained imprecise. In some cases, emphasis was on the inability of the artist to manipulate the medium at the exact point that the image was produced.<sup>209</sup> In others, it was more on the absence of immediate physical contact between the artist and a given bit of paper – the lack of an aura, in the Benjaminian sense. On occasion, though, the idea simply slipped into incoherence. An unnamed writer in *House and Garden*, for example, started by praising prints as 'made by the artists themselves working directly on to the plate or stone', before moving on to damn them on the same grounds: 'But they remain reproductions, albeit of limited editions, and you feel drawn perhaps to some more direct kind of artistic statement'.<sup>210</sup> The usage here, as on other occasions, seems both confused (these are not in any normal sense 'reproductions') and euphemistic – the underlying objection being that the prints are not unique.

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<sup>207</sup> Eric Newton, 'Round the London Galleries', the *Listener*, 19<sup>th</sup> July 1956, 96.

<sup>208</sup> Gordon, 'Contemporary Lithographs', 46. The concept of an autolithograph – distinguished from a reproduction – suggests an anxiety about the form's status; debates over its definition are discussed in Appendix 3.

<sup>209</sup> See, for example, Gerald Cohen's comment that of 'all the media normally employed by the artist, perhaps none is so indirect and so capable of imposing limitations upon him as lithography' (Gerald Cohen, 'The Senefelder Club', *Art News and Review*, 28<sup>th</sup> November 1953, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/16/3).

<sup>210</sup> 'Art on a Shoestring', *House and Garden*, April 1956, 76.

Newton's piece on the first New Editions Group exhibition included a brief history of attitudes to prints: 'A print can be – and the nineteenth century almost insisted that it should be – a "reproduction" of an "original". True, etchings could be more respectable: Whistler elevated them to a kind of aristocracy. And rather lower in the scale came lithographs which could be given a rough glamour by geniuses like Bonnard or Lautrec'.<sup>211</sup> As noted in the *Introduction*, Gordon Fyfe has given a scholarly elaboration of this narrative. Fyfe traces how, in the nineteenth century, established art institutions defined printmaking as the reproduction of paintings( and then devalued the results) while counter-efforts were made to establish original printmaking as an artistic practice – but with both sides sharing a belief in originality as the primary source of artistic value.<sup>212</sup> By the mid-twentieth century, when Newton was writing, reproductive printing had been largely mechanised through photo-reproduction.<sup>213</sup> However, the emphasis on the artistic value of originality remained. Indeed, in the post-war period particular emphasis was placed on the idea of the printmaker as an artist with a reputation secured in another, more mainstream, field (this was particularly true for lithography, as seen in relation to Miller's press, but held for other print media too). The engagement of such artists was offered as a warrant of printmaking's artistic validity, yet this very requirement for validation also underscored a second-class status. The reviews of the New Editions Group show made this clear. Stephen Bone's short review was headlined, 'Painters turn to Prints', while Newton concluded his piece with the observation that an 'enlarged repertory' of printmaking techniques had, against

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<sup>211</sup> Newton, 'Round the London Galleries', 19<sup>th</sup> July 1956, 96. In relation to Bonnard, Lautrec and their contemporaries, Philip James wrote in 1949, 'these artists were essentially painters whose painterly approach to the craft raised it to the level of an art'. ('Foreword', *Les Peintres Graveurs*, unpaginated).

<sup>212</sup> Fyfe, *Art, Power and Modernity*, chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>213</sup> The craft transcription of some pictures by Chromoworks for Lyons being a notable exception.

expectations, 'not established a set of specialist printmakers but has tempted artists whose chief preoccupation is painting to take to printmaking on the side'.<sup>214</sup> If there was a complaint from newspaper critics, it was that the painters had withheld their best work in the lower status form: Myfanwy Piper found an 'air of providing cheap coloured pictures by comparatively well-known artists'.<sup>215</sup>

If the involvement of such well-known artists could not reverse but only exacerbate prints' secondary status, a number of factors seem to have lain at its root. Given the limited tradition of artists' printmaking in Britain, the past offered the medium little authority in the mid-twentieth century. Indeed, the inheritance was, in large part, one which denigrated prints for their connection to reproduction. Contemporary appeals to an ill-defined concept of 'indirectness', to justify dismissive attitudes, suggest the extent to which ideas of artistic value were grounded in non-aesthetic criteria: the underlying complaint seeming to be about a lack of uniqueness or of the transformatory touch of the artist. In particular, though, low prices – trumpeted as prints' great virtue across the period – could also be a line of deprecation if artistic and monetary value were elided, and the very ubiquity of reference to prints' cheapness in sources from the period suggested that this was the case. The glib references to the 'poor' that frequently marked descriptions of print buyers were one aspect of this language and showed how the democratising rhetoric inherited from the 1930s could,

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<sup>214</sup> Stephen Bone, 'Painters turn to Prints, the *Manchester Guardian*, 19<sup>th</sup> July 1956, 5; Newton, 'Round the London Galleries', 19<sup>th</sup> July 1956, 96.

<sup>215</sup> Myfanwy Piper, 'The Painter-Engraver', the *Sunday Times*, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1956, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 992/8/5. The view of the participants as primarily painters may seem odd. Of those taking part in the 1956 exhibition several (Bawden, Cheese, La Dell, Alistair Grant, Gross, Hayter and Rothenstein) are now primarily known as printmakers; at the time, however, most were either exhibiting, or had relatively recently exhibited, paintings (Bawden, La Dell, Gross, Hayter, Rothenstein), were at the start of their careers (Cheese, Grant), or had European avant-garde associations which gave artistic lustre (Gross, Hayter).

in some cases, become subject to a decadent overlay. Thus, James' description of *Les Peintres-Graveurs* as a 'poor man's art gallery' was followed by the dubious observation that 'we are all poor men today', while an exhibition review in the *Studio* in 1951 pivoted from talk of 'the poor man's picture gallery' to providing costs in guineas, the traditional denomination of fine-art pricing.<sup>216</sup> The very flippancy of such usage betrayed a view of the print medium as lacking in substantive status.

The status ascribed to prints as a whole in post-war commentary emphasises how it mischaracterises the situation to see popular large-edition series as a discrete entity separate from prestige limited editions (the latter understood as largely the work of established artists and close to the ambit of painting). There were differences between the two forms – including in price and the way they were sold – but neither were generally treated as part of the artistic mainstream and both were understood as offering ownership to new audiences. Though the language of democratisation could be used, on occasion, with little substance, the concept of democratising art ownership through prints proved durable and informed the way both large and limited editions were pitched; in both cases, new, less affluent, and potentially younger, sections of the middle class seem to have been the primary target. The common ground between large and limited editions, the associated sense of the audience for prints, and the resulting idea of prints as a particular space at one remove from the artistic mainstream collectively form an important part of the context for the following two chapters in which I reflect on lithograph series produced for the Festival of Britain and for the Coronation.

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<sup>216</sup> 'Colour Reproductions', *The Studio*, October 1951, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/16/2.



Contemporaries' descriptions of a print boom in the decade after 1945, based on ebullient responses from some commentators to the rise of colour lithography, were offered in the first half of this chapter as a corrective to the dominant view of posterity, that the printmaking field in these years was exhausted and demoralised. However, the evidence reviewed in this final section shows that there are also limits to such revisionism. The status of prints within the wider art field was low and this held for colour lithographs as much as other print media. Indeed, two of the factors that I suggest were associated with low status – cheapness and the engagement of artists established as painters or sculptors – were particular features of lithography and central to its promotion at this time. As has been noted, lithography's advocates often cited the French tradition as a warrant for the medium's artistic merit and the same argument was sometimes extended to prints more generally. However, even here there was a double edge, with the weakness of British printmaking when compared to contemporary French examples also a staple of commentary. Typical was Donald Hamilton Fraser's laconic conclusion on the *RCA Coronation Lithographs* at the Redfern Gallery: 'Though the temptation exists, it would be uncharitable to compare this exhibition with the marvelous French prints hanging upstairs in the corridor'.<sup>217</sup>

Such perceived deficiency in product was sometimes traced back to a paucity of printmaking infrastructure. In particular, it was noted that there was an absence of Parisian-

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<sup>217</sup> *Art News and Review*, 16<sup>th</sup> May 1953, 4; for similar sentiments see 'Three Exhibitions of Prints', the *Times*, 13<sup>th</sup> December 1956, 3. Reviews of the New Editions Group's first, 1956, exhibition almost universally used a simultaneous exhibition of prints by Picasso at the Arts Council Gallery as a reference point.

style 'ateliers', dedicated to the production of artists' prints under the eye of a sympathetic master printer; instead British artists were left largely dependent on the resources of art schools.<sup>218</sup> Thus, Michael Rothenstein (an unusual figure among printmakers in commenting publicly on the state of the art) complained in 1956 of how '[c]ompared with the British ... French artists are in a position of very special advantage: their prints are the outcome of extended co-operation between painter and printer'.<sup>219</sup> Retailing was similarly patchy, one of the reasons Rothenstein was prepared to devote energy to promoting and organising the New Editions Group, from 1956, as an artist-led exhibiting society (Figure 26).<sup>220</sup> Looking back on the decade prior to this, Rothenstein's overall assessment of the field was sober, and he suggested that few publications had shown a profit. Nonetheless, he also detected tentative signs of a strengthening market ('In spite of this there is a growing public for prints') as well as one demonstration of a new approach to retailing, in the form of Robert Erskine's St George's Gallery Prints.

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<sup>218</sup> Myfanwy Piper noted how, in the absence of print studios 'in touch with modern art and artists', British printmakers relied 'on the hospitality of ... art schools' ('The Painter-Engraver', the *Sunday Times*, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1956, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 992/8/5). Inevitably, this dependence on art schools benefitted those with teaching positions, but that net was cast wide. For example, an array of artists taught at the Bath Academy of Art, at Corsham Court, Wiltshire and beneficiaries of its printing facilities included William Scott, Kenneth Armitage and Terry Frost (Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 178-9). When Edwin La Dell took over as Head of the School of Engraving (covering all print media) at the RCA in 1955, he invited artists from beyond the staff into the print studio (Rothenstein, 'Prints and Printmaking', *Arts News and Review*, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1956, 2). If the art school option was unavailable, artists had to go to some lengths to access resource: Tessa Sidey recounts how Bell, Grant, Rothenstein and others briefly ran a lithographic press in Upper Harley Street from 1951 ('The Devenish Brothers', *Print Quarterly*, 14: 4, 1997, 377-78). For lithographers, commercial printers were another option but restrictive practices by print unions (and high costs) largely excluded them (Jones, *Stanley Jones*, 77 and 105). For etchers, C. H. Welch continued the tradition of a collaborative master-printer (see Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 205) and printed Merlyn Evans' *Vertical Suite in Black*, discussed in Chapter 4.

<sup>219</sup> Rothenstein, 'Prints and Printmaking', *Arts News and Review*, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1956, 2. See also, Neville Wallis, 'At the Galleries: Prints', the *Observer* and Piper 'The Painter-Engraver' both 15 July 1956, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 992/8/5.

<sup>220</sup> See Appendix 4.

At the beginning of *Chapter Four*, I examine the impact of Erskine's gallery in the second half of the 1950s, as it sought to remedy weaknesses in the printmaking infrastructure. The current chapter has delineated the situation that Erskine was to inherit. This was one in which the post-war emergence of colour lithography could, for some, give a sense of vibrant activity, of a 'boom in lithographs'. Certainly, a significant amount of new work was created in the decade after 1945 and a line of press commentary enthused over the medium's painterly, modern and affordable qualities. This was not simply a period of limited activity of any kind in the printmaking field, as its subsequent reputation can imply. Nevertheless, below the surface the 'support system' for prints did remain largely obsolescent or immature. Moreover, prints were set low in the hierarchy of artistic media, loss of status being the negative counterpart of seemingly affirmatory language around a 'poor man's' art.

Often, such language was little more than a deracinated rhetoric, though some in the field retained from the late 1930s a commitment to the idea of prints – and lithographs in particular – as a means to democratise art ownership, albeit in the new context of post-war Britain. Such a commitment was a facet in the production of both the *AIA 1951 Lithographs* and the *RCA Coronation Lithographs* that are the subject of the following two chapters. The aim of democratising art ownership informed both series' origins, as I show, and for the AIA publication this aim linked it to the wider ambitions of the Festival of Britain. I've argued in relation to selected prints published by Lyons that a popular, democratising series could open a particular space for the creation of meanings that addressed contemporary issues, even if obliquely. In the case of the 1951 and 1953 series, this

connection to a specific historical event – Festival or Coronation – gave potential precision to such meanings, as I now explore.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**THE ARTISTS' INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION 1951 LITHOGRAPHS:**  
**CELEBRATION AND TENSION IN PICTURING THE FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN**

During the Festival of Britain summer in 1951, a series of lithographs was displayed in the foyer of the new Royal Festival Hall on London's South Bank, each of the prints being available for purchase. The series was sponsored by the Arts Council, which had responsibility for visual art across the Festival, but it had been instigated and published by an independent organisation, the Artists' International Association (AIA).<sup>221</sup> As detailed in the last chapter, the AIA had previously organised the *Everyman Prints* of 1940, a pioneering attempt to utilise lithography to produce a cheap edition of artists' prints for a wide audience. The new series, the *AIA 1951 Lithographs*, marked the organisation's return to print publishing after the war and with a set of designs that were explicitly intended to 'celebrate the Festival Year'.<sup>222</sup> The result was something unusual in British art history: a set of pictures outside of any government commission but associated with a national (and, as will be seen, political) event.

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<sup>221</sup> The Arts Council's role extended across all the arts; in the visual arts, it organised the two *Anthology* exhibitions of British painting since 1925 and commissioned works for a touring exhibition, *60 Paintings for '51*, as well as the sculpture and murals on the South Bank site (excepting those by Henry Moore and Jacob Epstein). Misha Black, the founder of the AIA and its chair until 1944, was the co-ordinating architect for the upstream section of the Festival's South Bank exhibition; however, he had no locus over visual art and there is no evidence he engaged with the production of the 1951 Lithographs. For the AIA and the Festival see Atkinson, *The Festival of Britain*, 24.

<sup>222</sup> Quoted from the series brochure (Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/2/33). The brochure is headed 'AIA 1951 Lithographs' and I have adopted that name or, for concision, *1951 Lithographs* here; however, other AIA documents refer to the *AIA Colour Lithographs* while the co-producers, School Prints, used the name *1951 Festival of Britain Colour Lithographs*. The AIA did not generally use an apostrophe in its name in the 1950s; however, to avoid confusion, I have reinserted this.

An extensive literature on the Festival of Britain explores how its physical expressions – its buildings, displays, and objects – embodied a story about Britain and Britishness that amounted to, in Becky Conekin’s phrase, a ‘collective project of imagining’.<sup>223</sup> Moreover, historians have noted, this project was not neutral. Rather, the Festival’s narrative aligned with the ambition of the Labour government, in power since July 1945, to construct from the legacy of war a new idea of the nation as egalitarian, harmonious and peaceable. In the current chapter, I look closely at the *AIA 1951 Lithographs* series (both as a set of images and as an exercise in print publication) and ask how far it conformed to the conceptions that constituted this ‘imagining’.<sup>224</sup> I begin by exploring ideas of Britain and Britishness promoted at the Festival in more detail and argue that the key metaphor of a ‘national family’, characterised by cohesion and tolerance, was affirmed by a significant strand within the *1951 Lithographs* and, through its visual expression, gained subtlety and emotional depth. In the section that follows, I use archival material to trace the origin, production and distribution of the series. This evidence allows an assessment of the ways in which activity in 1951 both continued and departed from the practices associated with the *Everyman Prints* and their discourse of democratising art ownership. Returning to a detailed consideration of specific images in the following two sections, I complicate my earlier proposal of congruence between lithographs and Festival

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<sup>223</sup> Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation*, 226. Comprehensive accounts and cultural histories of the Festival are provided by Conekin and by Atkinson, *The Festival*. Mary Banham and Bevis Hillier (eds), *A Tonic to the Nation: Festival of Britain, 1951*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1976, contains reminiscences of participants and sceptics. See also Addison, *Now the War is Over*, Chapter 8; Catherine Jolivet, *Landscape, Art and Identity in 1950s Britain*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2009, Chapter 1; and Nead, *The Tiger*, Chapter 6.

<sup>224</sup> The composition of the series’ is listed in Appendix 5. It is tempting to ascribe meanings to the series as a whole but, when interpreting images, this cannot be supported in the absence of a single originating subjectivity (regardless of critiques of the ‘author function’); I thus discuss individual images and propose trends within the series as a whole.

themes. I propose that by providing pictures of contemporary Britain in accordance with the AIA's rubric (itself intended to engage the Festival spirit and the desired broad audience) some of the prints allowed the informed viewer to recognise a truth that ran contrary to assertions of national harmony: that partisan politics and cultural contestation had, in fact, been intense since 1945. I also look at the one image from overseas in the series, John Minton's *Jamaica*, and its suggestion of anxiety amidst Britain's imperial legacy.

I end by relating particular consideration of the *1951 Lithographs* to a wider theme. As noted in my *Introduction*, the historiography of British post-war art has tended towards a teleological narrative in which the early years are of interest primarily as a contrast to other, forward-looking trends that gathered pace in the mid-1950s. In Anne Massey's work on the Independent Group, for example, the art displayed across the Festival of Britain is discussed as an exemplar of a 'welfare state culture' deemed to be aesthetically conservative, parochial and overtly nationalist and that provided the object against which members of the Independent Group defined themselves as an avant-garde.<sup>225</sup> In concluding the chapter, I suggest that the concept of a welfare state culture accurately captures something of the period but that it should be understood in a richer way than simply as a foil to later developments. As a set of images carrying complex potential meanings and made within an explicitly democratising format, the *AIA 1951 Lithographs*, I argue, can help to describe just such an alternative conception.

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<sup>225</sup> Massey's focus on the Independent Group gives a nuance to the chronology: early meetings of the group were in 1952, roughly coterminous with the zenith of 'welfare state culture', and Massey argues convincingly against seeing its participants as progenitors of (and validated by) 1960's Pop Art. Nonetheless, her history is based around a progressive narrative in which a dominant, conservative culture of the immediate post-war years is vanquished by varieties of modernism from the mid-1950s.

### Imagining Britain in 1951

In 1947, Herbert Morrison announced the Labour government's intention to organise a 'national display illustrating the British contribution to civilization past, present and future'.<sup>226</sup> The Festival of Britain was to be a celebration and reaffirmation of the British people after six years of war and six further years of austerity, a recognition of the reconstruction already achieved and a glimpse of a better tomorrow. The main site on London's South Bank proved a success, with eight and a half million visitors over the summer of 1951.<sup>227</sup> The organisers, however, looked beyond the capital with complementary events in Glasgow and Belfast, travelling exhibitions to major cities, and an improvement scheme for hill farmers in Wales.<sup>228</sup> Local activities were also encouraged, but their form not dictated. As Basil Taylor put it in the Festival guide, 'spontaneous expressions of citizenship will flower in the smallest communities as in the greatest': in Tottenham, bomb sites were transformed into gardens; in Aldeburgh, the war memorial was restored; while in Nottingham there was a nine-day trade fair.<sup>229</sup>

The AIA's intention to participate in the Festival, via a set of autolithographs on sale to the public, was announced in the organisation's newsletter of April-May 1950 and by October 1951 was described as its 'major effort for the Festival Year'.<sup>230</sup> The initial notice invited the submission of designs for a series that would be published, 'on the occasion of

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<sup>226</sup> Quoted in Conekin, *The Autobiography*, 28.

<sup>227</sup> Adrian Forty, 'Festival Politics', Banham and Hillier (eds), *Tonic*, 36. The South Bank site opened on 4<sup>th</sup> May and closed on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1951.

<sup>228</sup> The gap between repeated invocations of 'Britain' and coverage including Northern Ireland is discussed in Atkinson, *The Festival*, 28.

<sup>229</sup> Quoted *ibid.*, 74.

<sup>230</sup> *AIA Newsletter*, October 1951, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/21/33.



the 1951 exhibition’ and stressed that ‘prints should link up in spirit and in theme with the Festival of Britain’ adding the suggestion that ‘scenes of contemporary or historical life in Britain would be appropriate’ (though selection would be on the basis of ‘artistic worth’).<sup>231</sup> The submitted designs were to be judged by a panel that included the Arts Council, whose provision of £500 assistance would enable payment to the successful artists and whose sponsorship brought the initiative within the official Festival ambit. When this call was made, prospective participants would have had some idea of the ‘spirit and theme’ of the Festival from its organisers’ public statements. Indeed, while the final set of eighteen images was disparate (and with no hint of what was later christened ‘Festival style’, typified by molecular patterned fabrics or Abram Games’ light, clean and modern logo) such visual heterogeneity did not preclude an extensive alignment between the pictures in the series and Festival themes.<sup>232</sup>

The set as a whole reflected the Festival’s ambition for national reach and its desire to celebrate the particularity of individual places within a country-wide framework. Thus several prints in the series were named for specific locations, these ranged across the nation: Edinburgh, North Wales, Sheffield, Great Bardfield.<sup>233</sup> The last of these, in particular, captured the Festival idea that every corner of Britain was putting itself on show for 1951 and the complementary encouragement of a sympathetic, informed domestic tourism

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<sup>231</sup> *AIA Newsletter*, April-May 1950, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/21/25.

<sup>232</sup> The original intention was for a set of twenty designs, ten by invited participants and ten from an open competition; the final set of eighteen appears to have comprised eleven in the former category and seven in the latter, putting more weight on established reputations. For the final composition of the series, and its evolution, see Appendix 5.

<sup>233</sup> See Appendix 5.

(reflected in official outputs such as the *About Britain* series of touring guides).<sup>234</sup> The lithograph, by John Aldridge, shows four distinct views of the Essex village, all un-peopled and each set within a black, round-cornered frame and placed on a mottled green-blue background (Figure 27). Although Aldridge was a Bardfield resident, the effect is of photographs or postcards pasted in an album. The print could thus also suggest the gaze of a Festival year visitor and one concerned to remember and catalogue the village's examples of well-tended vernacular buildings and streetscapes, perhaps in the context of the contemporary belief that villages offered a model for successful mixed communities in new towns and urban redevelopment.<sup>235</sup>

While local events were central to the organisers' projection of a diverse but united nation, it was, nonetheless, the South Bank exhibition which provided the Festival's centre of gravity. The human-scale modernism of the site's purpose-built architecture offered visitors a glimpse of one potential future, for the nation's built environment at least.<sup>236</sup> The words and objects of the exhibition displays, on the other hand, put equal emphasis on the nation's past (or at least a semi-mythologised version of it). History, starting with the deep past of geology, was presented as a foundation for British national character, with this character the source of national harmony. The souvenir guide to the South Bank thus summarised the Festival's overarching theme of 'the Land and People' in terms of a tale unfolding over time,

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<sup>234</sup> For the *About Britain* guides See Atkinson, *The Festival*, 140-49.

<sup>235</sup> Sheila Robinson's frontispiece for W.G. Hoskins' *About Britain 5: Chilterns to Black Country* uses a similar cartouche-style device, though here the pictures appear embedded in brick. For the village as model for the urban see Atkinson, *The Festival*, 180-84.

<sup>236</sup> With the exception of the Royal Festival Hall, all structures were temporary; the Dome of Discovery (then the world's largest dome) and the Skylon (a tall vertical feature, supported by slim steel cables) were popular symbols of the Festival, though working within the site plan rather than grandiloquent solo gestures.

of the 'continuous impact that this particular land has made on this particular people, and of the achievements that this people has continued to derive from its relationship with this land'.<sup>237</sup> Writing in *The Listener*, the Labour backbencher Harold Nicolson was explicit about the motives which informed such a narrative: given the need 'to dissipate the gloom that hung like a pea soup above [our] heads', he wrote, the Festival planners had rightly chosen to 'emphasize our unity', showing the world that 'we are after all a people, cemented together by the gigantic pressures of history'.<sup>238</sup>

The Festival of Britain reversed the imperial exceptionalism which had animated pre-war Empire Exhibitions (at Wembley in 1924 and Glasgow in 1938) and instead stressed the British 'people' over the British 'nation' and posited that people's very 'ordinariness' as its key virtue.<sup>239</sup> In this conceptualisation, the British were modest, domestic, mutually supportive and peaceable (though courageous in self-defence), purged of any conflicting class interests by their shared history (as claimed by Nicolson). Such ideas animated much of the South Bank exhibition. For example, *The Lion and the Unicorn* pavilion offered a 'representation of the main qualities of the national character' through displays on the English language and crafts set alongside an 'Eccentrics corner' and objects telling the story

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<sup>237</sup> Quoted in Jolivette, *Landscape, Art and Identity*, 19.

<sup>238</sup> Quoted in Conekin, *The Autobiography*, 84. The idea of Festival 'narratives' is not merely metaphorical: scriptwriters were employed to draft the stories underpinning the work of designers and architects in each section of the Festival (Atkinson, *The Festival*, 25).

<sup>239</sup> Conekin, *The Autobiography*, 31-32. This characterisation had origins in the 1930s (when it retained a more radical edge) via documentary film makers (such as John Grierson) and writers (such as George Orwell), as well as in L. S. Lowry's populous vision of the northern city, but it gained force in wartime, notably through J.B. Priestley's popular 'Postscript' broadcasts.

of 'Country Life' and the British 'instinct of liberty'.<sup>240</sup> The paradigmatic example, however, was Humphrey Jennings' film *Family Portrait*, screened in the South Bank's Telekinema. Throughout the film, Jennings employed the metaphor of the nation as family, with the Festival imagined as a 'family reunion' (and this metaphor was echoed in other Festival events and exhibitions).<sup>241</sup> In this way, the country was equated with its smallest, most self-sufficient social unit and national values equated with the attitudes that make for domestic peace: 'Tolerance, courage and faith, the will to be disciplined and free together'.<sup>242</sup> One consequence of this focus on Britain as essentially domestic was the near absence of reference to Empire or Commonwealth in the Festival's programme.<sup>243</sup> For some, this gap was symptomatic of a wider censorship of the outside world that gave the Festival a narrow, parochial character, pre-occupied by Britain's contribution to other nations rather than vice versa.<sup>244</sup> It was not, though, an imposition on visitors: in 1951, the country's continuing imperial entanglements were perceived by most (however incorrectly) as both an irrelevance to daily life and outside the idea of a settled, white British nation with which they identified.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 94 and 96-7. The interior design of the pavilion, and its exhibition displays, was delivered by staff of the RCA (see Seago, *Burning the Box*, 29 and 52); via Edwin La Dell, the RCA was also associated with the *1951 Lithographs*, see the following section.

<sup>241</sup> For deployment of the family theme see Atkinson, *The Festival*, 161-64.

<sup>242</sup> Quoted *ibid.*, 93. *Family Portrait* is available to view via BFI screenonline, <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1315033/index.html>, accessed 4<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

<sup>243</sup> The British Commonwealth of Nations was initiated in 1926 with a modernised constitution issues through the London Declaration in 1949; by 1951 'Commonwealth' had largely replaced 'Empire' in official discourse.

<sup>244</sup> See Forty, 'Festival Politics', 35; the same argument is made by contemporary scholars, for example Nead, *Tiger*, 205.

<sup>245</sup> Conekin, *The Autobiography*, 195 (and chapter 7 as a whole); Conekin describes, rather than endorsing, this attitude.

Among the *AIA 1951 Lithographs*, several images were informed by a mood which was bright and optimistic, but also self-contained and temperate, matching the Festival's celebration of national resilience and potential, but also its emphasis on the people's ordinariness and domesticity. Such an alliance with Festival themes was unsurprising given the initial decision to link the series' publication to it, as well as the AIA's broad political sympathies. Julian Trevelyan's *Regatta*, for example, places a young couple as its focal point, looking out on a holiday scene (Figure 28). Their smart, casual dress connotes youth, leisure and even a degree of modernity (clothes rationing had ended only two years earlier) but the paddling girl in their eye-line hints at a future fulfilled by family rather than merely material goods. The pink tinge to the sky suggests evening, enforcing a sense of quiet, intimate reflection at the end of a perfect day. Elsewhere in the series, Edwin La Dell's *M.C.C. at Lords* shared a similar affective territory but its cricketing subject also deepened the thematic connections with the Festival – points I explore further in the following paragraphs (Figure 29).<sup>246</sup>

Sport was the dedicated topic of a South Bank pavilion. The five giant letters of its title were hoisted onto separate open-air display cases, each dedicated to a major game and including one for cricket.<sup>247</sup> Indeed, sport offered useful support to the Festival's principal

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<sup>246</sup> Figure 29 shows the School Prints edition of La Dell's lithograph, and it is this that is described in the text. The impression held by the Aberystwyth School of Art Collection lacks the purple-red colour used in the foremost boy's jumper and elsewhere; intriguingly, its orientation is not reversed relative to the School Print version, despite the latter being printed on an offset press.

<sup>247</sup> Atkinson, *The Festival*, 111 and 137 (Atkinson also notes that 'cricket weeks' were a feature of local Festival activities, *The Festival*, 63). The literature on the Festival contains little on the Sport Pavilion architecture (though see Elaine Harwood and Alan Powers (eds), *Festival of Britain, Twentieth Century Architecture 5: The Journal of the Twentieth Century Society*, 2001, 78); the main external elements are visible in archive footage included in William Mager's short video interview with the architects Gordon and Ursula Bower: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdoUktaNapM>, accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2017.

narratives. International games like cricket offered instances of British invention and service to the world, while ideas of fair play and sportsmanship were congruent with its conception of British character, and the sports team complemented the family as a metaphor for national solidarity.<sup>248</sup>

In historical reality, however, the particular subject of La Dell's print, cricket, continued to bear scars of social conflict and exclusion. The MCC itself, as the sport's law makers, upheld a differentiation between amateurs and professionals that in effect continued the traditional distinction between 'gentlemen' and 'players'.<sup>249</sup> At the club's home ground, Lord's, multiple markers of this hierarchy included separate entrances and changing facilities. Nonetheless, cricket could be claimed as 'the English national sport' in that it was, unusually at the time, followed by both the middle and working classes and across both the north and south of the country.<sup>250</sup> Attendance at matches had seen a post-war resurgence, reaching a peak of three million in 1947, and in the difficult circumstances of reconstruction the game achieved a particular status in the national culture.<sup>251</sup> A clutch of gifted players – aided by some exceptional summer weather in the late 1940s – fed the appetite of crowds for acts of beauty and drama outside the mundane realities of shortages and near imperceptible economic recovery. The recollections of a young civil servant give a

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<sup>248</sup> See Conekin, *The Autobiography*, 169 – 70.

<sup>249</sup> Abolition of the distinction came in 1963; in 1954 the selection of a professional as England captain could still cause controversy. See Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, 290; David Kynaston, *Family Britain 1951 – 57*, London: Bloomsbury, 2009, 137. Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) was founded in 1787 and based at Lord's from 1814; the club formed cricket's governing body from 1788 to 1993.

<sup>250</sup> Richard Holt, *Sport*, 175. Here England, not Britain, is the relevant geography. Cricket was not free of geographic associations, however: E.W. Fenton's illustration of a village green game was the frontispiece for the Festival's *About Britain* guide no.3, *Home Counties*.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, 286; Paul Addison, *Now the War is Over*, 120.

flavour of these emotions: 'True there wasn't much in the shops and there was even less money around to spend in them. But to be young, alive and unwounded was a joyous experience ... The weather seemed pretty good too. Every Saturday, in that golden summer of 1947, we would go to Lords with our packets of sandwiches to watch Compton and Edrich.'<sup>252</sup> Denis Compton was the outstanding batsman of the day, his ability to transform the psychological state of the long-suffering spectators captured concisely by the contemporary sports writer Neville Cardus: 'The strain of long years of anxiety and affliction passed from all hearts and shoulders at the sight of Compton in full flow ... There was no rationing in an innings by Compton'.<sup>253</sup>

La Dell's print was made towards the end of this cricketing moment, but the game's post-war renaissance and symbolism formed the background to its production and interpretation. Reflecting the continuing realities of the game, suggestions of class enter La Dell's picture, notably through the well-dressed older couple at the batsman's left shoulder where the man's long coat and cane carry an aristocratic association (with a possible counter-point in the dignified, working figure to the batsman's right who might be identified as a club steward).<sup>254</sup> More prominent in the image than any sense of class division, however, is an emphasis on a shared moment, with a complex interlinking of gazes between the groups of figures in the picture and out to encompass the viewer via the steward. La Dell

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<sup>252</sup> Quoted in Peter Hennessy, *Never Again: Britain 1945-51*, London: Bloomsbury, 1992, 306. Compton and Edrich played for Middlesex, who also used Lord's.

<sup>253</sup> Addison, *Now the War is Over*, 120.

<sup>254</sup> A combination of social mixing and separation can also be seen in Edwin Oldfield's print for the series, *Derby Day*, with charabanc parked to one side, saloon cars to the other; class mixing at the Derby is described by Addison, *Now the War is Over*, 126.

sets up a similar inclusivity in relation to gender. While this is an ostensibly male world, the young woman on the batsman's left holds her place as a main point of interest in the foreground, assisted by the fabric of her summer dress. An interest in dress is continued through the multiple hats peppered across the picture as one of its main compositional devices and uniting male and female heads. Moreover, the nature of the masculinity presented is nuanced by the attention-seeking presence of multiple schoolboys: this is a vision which encompasses children and family as well as sporting hero and commanding maturity.

Nonetheless, it is sportsmanship that, I suggest, is the key theme of the picture's narrative. With his back to the crease, walking towards the viewer, the batsman is most naturally understood as returning after being dismissed, the game already restarted behind him.<sup>255</sup> Despite any such moment of personal disappointment, the colours of his cap and badge show a pride in his team while, most importantly, he takes the time to sign autographs for his young admirers (whose own boisterousness is contained by order, their autograph books held in a neat row). His head, bowed in the act of writing, reinforces a sense of momentary defeat but also his modest service to others. Overall, it is a performance of masculine self-restraint and duty which echoes the culture that Martin

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<sup>255</sup> La Dell's loose representation leaves a number of details ambiguous. Despite the print's title, the batsman does not wear MCC colours (or those of any other team playing at the ground). In addition, a dismissed batsman would walk to the Pavilion not, as here, the stands (the view would be identifiable to a contemporary viewer with knowledge of the ground) and in principle he might have been dismissed earlier or, possibly, be waiting to bat. I thank Neil Robinson of the Marylebone Cricket Club Library for relevant information.



Francis has proposed was central to the period of the Labour government and to the conduct of its senior figures.<sup>256</sup>

La Dell's lithographic technique was well matched to the aesthetics of a batsman's display. With the broad application of colour pushing at the boundaries of comprehensible figuration, the artist, too, strikes out in the optimistic hope of success. In a rare contemporary critical assessment, James Boswell described how La Dell achieved a 'moving pattern of light and shadow' from two or three colour plates and then picked out the main forms with accents in 'the briefest shorthand'.<sup>257</sup> 'The method is', Boswell continued, 'always balanced on a razor-edge. The adjustment of tone and colour must be exactly right or the design will fall to pieces'. In *M.C.C. at Lords*, the resulting visual qualities of the image echo the transformative potential ascribed to cricket, and its batting heroes, in the post-war moment. The comfortable, unrationed sunshine of 'that golden summer of 1947' inhabits the print's harmony of cloudless, light-blue sky and acid green turf, along with the generous areas of strong white. Its foreground, made visually distinct by large bold blocks of black, anchors such virtuosity to provide a confident base for future hope. At the same time, too much seriousness is punctured by elements of caricature, with the capped schoolboys at the front and fat umpire and simplified cricketers behind. All in all, post-war life could be fun.

La Dell's image can thus be understood as working with the grain of the Festival. In taking a sporting subject it aligned with a major Festival topic, while its treatment of that

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<sup>256</sup> Martin Francis, 'The Labour Party: Modernisation and the Politics of Restraint', Conekin, Mort and Waters (eds.), *Moments of Modernity*, 152-170.

<sup>257</sup> James Boswell, 'The Senefelder Club', the *Studio*, 147: 732, March 1954, 68.

topic echoed Festival themes. Cricket is shown as offering a shared experience to a variety of people; further, it is a place for the display of modest pride and generous behaviour, and of a masculinity which accepts an obligation towards children. Moreover, as a subject cricket carried with it recent memories summer sun and possibilities beyond the rationed present, a quality echoed in La Dell's bravura technique. The print thus looked back over the years since 1945 in a way which expressed pleasure found amid difficulty, and, like the Festival itself, offered a modest celebration of the post-war experience whilst eschewing overt, party-political partisanship.

As the Minister responsible for the Festival within government, Herbert Morrison, in particular, was committed to holding an event that was explicitly non-party political, as well as matching didacticism with straightforward pleasure.<sup>258</sup> Nonetheless, there was no ambiguity about its underlying ideological tenor. Hugh Casson, the Festival's Director of Architecture, later noted that 'Churchill, like the rest of the Tory party, was against the Festival which they (quite rightly) believed was the advanced guard of socialism'.<sup>259</sup> The Festival celebrated the reconstruction and social reform already achieved since 1945, while its conception of Britishness, though presented as timeless, was one recast as a foundation for the welfare state. Its language echoed Labour's own rhetoric and self-identification as the 'People's Party', along with Labour's emphasis on the solidarity and shared ordinariness

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<sup>258</sup> Morrison is quoted in Adrian Forty, 'Festival Politics', 36: 'the last thing in the world I would wish would be that this should turn into or was ever contemplated as a political venture'; though Forty also notes that Clement Attlee wrote to Morrison suggesting the 1951 election be held as late in the year as possible, to allow the Festival to amass maximum Labour support. For Morrison and the Festival as enjoyment see Conekin, *The Autobiography*, 12; for the balance of earnestness and pleasure see Atkinson, *The Festival*, 199.

<sup>259</sup> Quoted in Conekin, *The Autobiography*, 48-49 (see also the same work, 15, for Conservative opposition).

of the British population.<sup>260</sup> Further, the bold new architecture, the colour and vivacity, all held the promise that if national unity of purpose could be combined with government planning, following the Festival's example, then there was a more comfortable and exciting future still to come – a 'brighter socialism' in the retrospective phrase of another Festival architect, H. T. Cadbury-Brown.<sup>261</sup>

It was a part of the vision of many in the Labour Party that the post-war programme of national reform should include the democratisation of culture (as mentioned in my *Introduction*). This belief had motivated support for the new Arts Council after 1946 and underpinned the government's political commitment to the Festival, where it was also embraced by the organisers. For example, the brochure for the Festival's 'London Season of Arts', sponsored by the Arts Council, stated its 'democratic conviction' that 'good art is enjoyable art and should be appreciated by all and sundry, whatever their incomes may be'.<sup>262</sup> Given its own history, the return of the AIA to print publishing, with support from the Arts Council, suggests that the *1951 Lithographs* were a further example of how this 'democratic conviction' animated Festival activity. Indeed, an examination of the series' origins and production, which I pursue in the following section, makes clear that such a commitment was an explicit motivating factor among AIA organisers and in particular for

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<sup>260</sup> See *Ibid.*, 9 and 48-49; see also Atkinson, *The Festival*, 153 for how the Festival's London book exhibition made explicit reference to the Beveridge Report (1943) and welfare state planning.

<sup>261</sup> Quoted *ibid.*, 38.

<sup>262</sup> Quoted *Ibid.*, 119. Such a stress on the edifying dissemination of high-culture inevitably led to charges of paternalism, that the Festival was a 'posh, BBC-approved affair' (Hillier, 'Introduction', Banham and Hillier (eds), *Tonic*, 14). A decade later Michael Frayn reflected on this theme, recognising the paternalistic instincts of the 'radical middle-class do gooders' comprising the Festival organisers, but also mourning that their values, 'philanthropic, kindly, whimsical, cosy, optimistic, middlebrow', were 'doomed to eclipse' with the Labour government's fall a month after the Festival's close (Michael Frayn, 'Festival' in Sissons and French, *The Age of Austerity*, 323).

Edwin La Dell. However, this consideration also shows that the relationship between prints and an ideal of democratisation was contested – and the realisation of this ideal was a challenge – in ways that had developed from the experience with the *Everyman Prints* in the late 1930s.

### **‘Lithograph Fever’: the Origins and Publication of the AIA 1951 Lithographs**

Although the *Everyman Prints* had proved, in the mid-term, a commercial failure, this did not dent the series’ reputation as an exercise in democratising visual art. As noted in *Chapter One*, the prints were, for example, praised as a model of public engagement by the influential Dartington Hall *Arts Enquiry* in 1946. Nonetheless, limited sales may have delayed further publishing ventures by the AIA. Percy Horton had declared the *Everyman Prints* ‘just a beginning’, but no similar exercise was attempted for another decade, at which time little consideration seems to have been given to the successes or failures of the earlier publication.<sup>263</sup> The re-emergence of the potential of the AIA as a publisher of affordable artists’ prints in the late 1940s seems to have owed a significant amount to the vision and energy of Edwin La Dell, as Chairman of its Prints Committee.<sup>264</sup> As has been seen, La Dell had been commissioned for Lyons’ first series in 1947 and exhibited lithographs at the Society of London Painter-Printers’ exhibition in 1948. In that year he also joined the staff of

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<sup>263</sup> Quoted in Horton, ‘Art for Everyman’, 162. The earlier series was not entirely forgotten, however: an early proposal from 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1949 talks of ‘a further series of AIA lithographs’ (V&A Archive, ACGB/121/615), while occasional use of the title *AIA Colour Lithographs* draws a contrast with the earlier, largely black and white set.

<sup>264</sup> I retain the gendered job title used in relevant archival material. The effectiveness of the Prints Committee is discussed in Appendix 5. His son has written how, ‘In the process of cataloguing Eddy’s work ... I have discovered a lot more about his commitment to the wider dissemination of art’; however I have not been able to ascertain if this refers to the existence of additional, private documentary material (Tom La Dell and Maria La Dell, *Edwin La Dell: Lithographs and Etchings*, Maidstone, Kent: Passiflora, 2004, 11).

the Royal College of Art (RCA) as a tutor in the Etching School (by this time the de facto print school) within new School of Graphic Design.<sup>265</sup> In preparation for the Festival of Britain, he was also commissioned to produce five mural panels for the *New Schools* section of the South Bank exhibition.<sup>266</sup>

Antony Griffiths has used the origin and subsequent production of the *AIA 1951 Lithographs* to argue that the democratising ideal was waning in salience within the printmaking field in the early 1950s. Griffiths uses the limited evidence within the AIA archive to suggest that the series was initially conceived outside the organisation and thought about in terms of a popular edition.<sup>267</sup> Such an approach would reflect the inclusive spirit of the Festival and the previous involvement of several potential participants in large-edition initiatives by Contemporary Lithographs and Lyons, as well as the *Everyman Prints*. Griffiths hypothesises that the AIA then put itself forward to publish the proposed series. However, the final result was not, in fact, a set of low-cost, high volume prints, but rather a compromise where a full set of eighteen lithographs were issued in a limited edition, sold at £4/4/0d each, but a subgroup of six were put into a machine-printed run of 1,000 impressions that was produced and marketed by School Prints and sold at the markedly

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<sup>265</sup> Mellen, 'Biographical Note', 19; for RCA internal organisation see Seago, *Burning the Box*, 25-27. La Dell became head of the Etching Department in 1955 and held the post until his premature death in 1970. The name was changed to 'Printmaking' in 1961. Other contributors to the *AIA 1951 Lithographs* who were current staff or former students at the RCA were Boswell, Cheese (who graduated in 1950), Marsden, Minton, Oldfield, Robinson, Scarfe and Sellars (still in his final year at the College).

<sup>266</sup> Seago, *Burning the Box*, 52. There was significant overlap between the group of artists commissioned by the Festival organisers for murals and other designs, the membership of the AIA, and the contributors to the *1951 Lithographs*; those in all three categories, in addition to La Dell, were Boswell, Minton, Rosoman, Scarfe, Trevelyan and Vaughan (see the *AIA Newsletter* for April-May 1951, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/21/31).

<sup>267</sup> Griffiths, 'The Print Publications', 66; who originated the series is left ambiguous.

lower price of £0/12/6d.<sup>268</sup> Griffiths concludes that this compromise reflected a particular moment at the turn of the 1950s, when the idea of the artists' lithograph as a democratising form was retreating and, in a return to the early twentieth-century stance, lithographs were increasingly positioned alongside intaglio prints as rare, fine art objects, a move reflected in and partly driven by the Redfern Gallery's contemporary Anglo-French shows.<sup>269</sup> The artists involved in the *AIA 1951 Lithographs* thus adopted the limited edition to signal their artistic seriousness, but the earlier idea of lithography's democratic potential exerted a residual influence leading to the complementary cheap impressions in a mixed format. It was, according to Griffiths, 'the last point when two views of what constitutes an artist's print – which are now assumed to be conflicting – could be held simultaneously, if only with some discomfort' and a milestone in the eclipse of democratising aspirations for printmaking.<sup>270</sup>

However, publication of the *1951 Lithographs* was supported by the Arts Council (as noted above) and additional information about the origin of the series in the Arts Council Archive revises aspects of Griffiths' narrative, with implications for his conclusion.<sup>271</sup> This documentation makes clear that the AIA was the source of the originating idea for the series, not merely its executor, and that it continued to hold firmly to the democratising potential of the large, popular edition lithograph; the push towards limitation came not from the artists involved but from a senior Arts Council administrator. Thus, the initial proposition

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<sup>268</sup> A detailed description of the production of both the limited and large editions of the series (covering commissioning, selection, administration and printing is given in Appendix 5). Impressions in the School Prints edition tend to use more saturated colours and the images are reversed (in fact returned to the orientation of the original design) through use of an offset press.

<sup>269</sup> Griffiths, 'The Print Publications', 67.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>271</sup> The Arts Council of Great Britain Archive is held by the V&A Archives.

was sent by La Dell to Philip James, the Arts Council's Director of Art, in December 1949, and had expanding art ownership at its core. La Dell's note set out how, 'The prints will all be original lithographs and the scheme will provide a means of circulating fine prints at a low price to a large public'.<sup>272</sup> An accompanying memo described a proposed edition of 1,500 for each of twenty images, to be sold at £0/10/6d or £0/7/6d, depending on size.<sup>273</sup> La Dell's proposal was endorsed in a follow-up letter sent by the AIA chairman, Beryl Sinclair.<sup>274</sup> However, the AIA was mistaken in thinking that James would find this idea attractive, even if La Dell stressed that these were to be 'fine prints'.

Following a conversation between the two men in early January 1950, La Dell revised his proposal, making it clear that James had refused Arts Council support for a popular edition.<sup>275</sup> This time the twenty designs were to be produced in a limited, hand-pulled edition of just twenty impressions each. However, the anticipated profits from sales were still to be used to fund a machine-printed edition of 1,000 for half of the designs, with the intention of going on to produce a further 1,000 of these designs, again from internally produced profits.<sup>276</sup> This 'snowball' idea (in La Dell's phrase) offered a compromise which delivered both James' desire to limit Arts Council involvement to a limited edition and La

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<sup>272</sup> La Dell to James (covering letter and attached memorandum), 21 December 1949, V&A Archive, ACGB/121/615.

<sup>273</sup> Julia Beaumont-Jones (in *A Century of Prints*, 12-13) claims that La Dell was seeking to establish a new collectors' market for prints; this would seem to be inaccurate.

<sup>274</sup> Sinclair to James, 21 December 1949, V&A Archive, ACGB/121/615. I have retained gendered job titles used in the correspondence.

<sup>275</sup> La Dell to James (covering letter and attached memorandum), 25 January 1950, V&A Archive, ACGB/121/615. Two versions of the revised proposal exist with some minor differences.

<sup>276</sup> As already seen, this was still not the final shape of the scheme (and further details of its evolution are in Appendix 5). La Dell states at this stage that a New York dealer was prepared to buy half of the stock of the limited edition; this did not prove to be the case.

Dell's enthusiasm for reaching as wide an audience as possible (and La Dell distinguishes the two by referring to the 'expensive' and the 'cheap' versions). When the Arts Council went on to accept this proposal, it was at pains to emphasise that its contribution was exclusively for the limited edition scheme: 'It is understood that the receipts from the sale of the limited edition of these lithographs may be used for the publication of a larger edition at a popular price. My Council would regard their association with this scheme as terminating with the production of the limited edition.'<sup>277</sup>

Philip James seems to have had a limited enthusiasm for lithography and for large editions in particular. In steering La Dell away from a machine-printed run, he may have been utilising his knowledge that Lyons were preparing a second series of their own large-edition, popular lithographs for 1951, creating a danger of market saturation. However, his response to these too had been lukewarm. In June 1949, Lyons had first pitched for a display of their proposed new work within the Festival of Britain and in September the following year James had replied with a firm refusal.<sup>278</sup> The eventual hosting of an exhibition of Lyons prints to coincide with the Festival, at the Arts Council's Gallery in St James's Square, and a subsequent regional tour, resulted from pressure from Lyons and lobbying to reverse James' decision by its allies in senior positions in the Festival Office.<sup>279</sup> When a further bid came in from Michael Rothenstein (looking for Arts Council support for a set of

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<sup>277</sup> Secretary General to La Dell, 27 April 1950, V&A Archive, ACGB/121/615.

<sup>278</sup> James to Julian Salmon, 22 July 1949, V&A Archive, ACGB/121/621 (which makes reference to earlier correspondence); James to Julian Salmon, 30 September 1950, V&A Archive, ACGB/121/621. The proposal was forwarded by the Festival Office to the Arts Council, accounting for the delay.

<sup>279</sup> Julian Salmon to Gabriel White, 16 October 1950; Jane Lidderdale to Huw Wheldon, 23 October 1950; James to Julian Salmon, 25 January 1951; all V&A Archive, ACGB/121/621. It was also helped by the late cancellation of an exhibition from Sweden which freed up the Gallery.



Festival lithographs relating to Great Bardfield, by himself and other artists resident there) James responded negatively, asserting that there 'will be a superfluity if we are not careful ... the lithograph fever is spreading' (James suggested the Bardfield artists throw in their lot with the AIA, resulting in the works by Rothenstein and Aldridge within the *1951 Lithographs*).<sup>280</sup> Such apparent concern for commercial considerations notwithstanding, it might be speculated that James lacked sympathy for the political ideal of democratising art ownership. Richard Carline, from the AIA, described him as 'very suspicious of anything which sounded a bit like socialism and left-wing views'.<sup>281</sup>

Whatever James' motivation, it is clear that the publication of the *1951 Lithographs* in a limited edition was the choice of the Arts Council. La Dell, on the other hand, saw a large edition as essential to the proposal and successfully sought a way to retain it in some form despite James' hostility. The final arrangement saw the production costs for the six works printed in La Dell's 'cheap' edition covered by the artists themselves through re-investment of their initial £25 design fee; this fee was itself funded from the Arts Council moneys, thus neatly circumventing the Council's proscription on using its funding for a large edition.<sup>282</sup> In reporting on his arrangement with School Prints, La Dell asserted that this emphasis on affordability had been shared by his Print Committee colleagues and it seems to have been well received by the AIA's Central Committee. Minutes from their June 1951

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<sup>280</sup> James to Michael Rothenstein, 19 April 1950, V&A Archive, ACGB/121/615. The artists named in Rothenstein's original proposal were himself, Aldridge, Edward Bawden and Kenneth Rowntree. James' assertion of spreading 'lithograph fever' is further evidence for the bullish sentiment around lithography at the beginning of the decade, discussed in the preceding chapter.

<sup>281</sup> Quoted in Morris and Radford, *The AIA*, 75. In his correspondence with the AIA in the Arts Council Archive (V&A Archive, ACGB/121/615) James casts himself as the guardian of quality against producer self-interest.

<sup>282</sup> Keith Vaughan refused to contribute his fee, see Appendix 5.

meeting record La Dell's statement that 'Right from the first meeting of the prints committee' it was the intention that a machine-printed run would 'make these lithographs available to a wider public at a much lower cost' (La Dell makes no reference to using School Prints to reach a specifically educational audience).<sup>283</sup> As had been the case with the *Everyman Prints*, this utilisation of lithography to reach a broad audience also sat within wider organisational activities aimed at democratising visual art, often delivered with flair. In the year following the Festival, for example, the AIA organised an open-air exhibition of works for sale in the Vauxhall Pleasure Garden which, according to press reports, created a Royal Academy for everyone and was seen by over 40,000 people each day.<sup>284</sup> The organisation also ran a picture loan scheme for people's homes.<sup>285</sup>

If the democratising ideal which had launched the *Everyman Prints* continued to motivate senior figures at the AIA, the production of the *1951 Lithographs* lacked the full-throated organisational commitment which had marked the earlier series where, for example, a voluntary printing unit had been mobilised.<sup>286</sup> This was unsurprising given the chronic political disunity affecting the organisation as well as an antipathy to government foreign policy among some members which may have constrained their support for a scheme associated with the official Festival.<sup>287</sup> Fractures had become apparent in 1948, with

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<sup>283</sup> AIA Central Committee Minutes, 12 June 1951, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/2/25. The AIA had no financial motive: the financial model for the large edition gave it no income (Griffiths, 'The Print Publications', 65).

<sup>284</sup> *Daily Graphic*, 2 August 52; Neville Wallis, the *Observer* (undated); Eric Newton, 'Art and the People', *Time and Tide*, 16 August 52; all Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/16/2. The Battersea Pleasure Garden was the one area of the Festival's Thameside temporary structures to be spared immediate demolition

<sup>285</sup> 'Art on a Shoestring', *House and Garden*, April 1956, 76/7; *Vogue*, December 1953 (no page reference).

<sup>286</sup> For printing of the *1951 Lithographs* see Appendix 5.

<sup>287</sup> Gerald Barry, as senior Festival organiser, was overt about its role in fighting the Cold War: "Fighting, I mean ... with every moral and spiritual weapon in our democratic armoury", quoted in Atkinson, *The Festival*, 16.

disputes between supporters and opponents of the Soviet backed coup in Czechoslovakia. Then, in 1950, members divided over whether the organisation's response to war in Korea should be support for the United Nations (and hence for Britain's emerging military operation) or for a domestic peace movement that had Communist Party backing.<sup>288</sup> An update report on progress with the lithographs series in the *AIA Newsletter* for September 1950 was thus overshadowed by three preceding pages of disputatious reports from an Extraordinary General Meeting. This had debated opposing motions to either endorse the British Peace Committee or back the UN, meaning that the sentence immediately preceding the lithograph report is a threat of resignation from Beryl Sinclair, the person who had first promoted the print scheme to the Arts Council and who was a strong anti-Soviet.<sup>289</sup>

The strong rhetoric of democratisation that had surrounded dissemination of the *Everyman Prints* and informed their reception was also absent in 1951. Marketing of the cheap edition was undertaken by School Prints, which utilised its existing distribution networks focussed on institutional buyers from education and local government.<sup>290</sup> The

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<sup>288</sup> Radford, *Art for a Purpose*, 164; Morris and Radford, *The AIA*, 82. In 1953, these political tensions led the AIA to adopt a new constitution with more generalised political objectives, reorienting it towards a conventional artist-led exhibiting society. The AIA Lisle Street gallery was maintained until 1971 and the organisation was disbanded in 1972. The literature on the AIA focuses on the late 1930s, and its apparently more straightforward politics; Morris and Radford report briefly on the internal battles ahead of 1953, but with minimal coverage of the organisation's wider activities in this period.

<sup>289</sup> *AIA Newsletter*, September 1950, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/21/27. The first resolution was proposed by Patrick Carpenter and seconded by Victor Pasmore; the second was put forward by Morris Kestelman and Stephen Bone. As noted, Sinclair supported Kestelman and Bone; La Dell's continued membership of the AIA beyond 1953 (AIA membership fees, 1948 – 60, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/11/3-4) suggests he may also have sympathised with this position. At least one participant in the series was opposed to government foreign policy: Patrick Carpenter. As noted in Appendix 5, there was unhappiness with Carpenter's image amongst some of the organisers; it seems unlikely that this had a political content but I have been unable to locate a copy or a reproduction of the image to consider the point further.

<sup>290</sup> School prints also promoted the machine-printed edition overseas; for example, on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1952 three exhibitions were forthcoming in South Africa (Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/2/26/126).

brochure for the limited-edition series stressed the autographic quality of the work rather than its affordability, perhaps unsurprisingly given the prints' relatively high price (well above that for Lyons' new series, starting at £0/14/0d). Nonetheless, and echoing a theme from the preceding chapter, press reception of the series still conceived it in terms of broadening art ownership and deployed overheated rhetoric about the prints representing 'the poor man's picture gallery'; these were still relatively cheap works and understood as such.<sup>291</sup>

Despite the wider organisational crisis, individual AIA members, and in particular the Secretary, Diana Uhlman, put significant effort into the distribution and sale of the limited edition. The series was shown in a number of innovative locations, beyond the AIA's own Lisle Street Gallery, though evidence of how far their selection sought new, lower-income buyers is mixed. The flagship display, mentioned prominently in the brochure, was at the Royal Festival Hall on the Festival's main South Bank site and in a review in June 1951 *Art News and Review* mentioned the series as being hung in the new Hall's foyer.<sup>292</sup> There seemed to be some difficulty over the location, however, and the *AIA Newsletter* in July reported that plans for a show in the foyer had been shelved. Instead, half the works were now in the Hall's special exhibition space ('beautifully lit on the wall facing the river') and the remaining half would replace them later.<sup>293</sup> Once the Festival of Britain closed, the AIA was

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<sup>291</sup> The *Studio*, October 1951, Tate Gallery Archive TGA 7043/16/2, quoted in *Chapter One*. The *Guardian* review ('Colour Lithography', the *Manchester Guardian*, 3 July 1951, 5) seems slightly confused in stating, 'The association has financed the printing of large editions of a number of lithographs by its members in the hope that these will be bought by many people and institutions who find oil -paintings beyond their means'; the individual works discussed are from the limited edition.

<sup>292</sup> 'Miscellany', *Art News and Review*, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1951, 6.

<sup>293</sup> *AIA Newsletter*, July 1951, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/21/32. The alternative arrangements may have, in fact, been less satisfactory; writing to Philip James on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1951, Uhlman asks about returning to the

able to arrange a brief hang in a committee room of the House of Commons, keeping the lithographs in the public eye and reasserting their claim to national relevance, as well as demonstrating its own undimmed capacity for presentational chutzpah.<sup>294</sup>

An effort to reach an audience beyond that of the West End gallery was suggested by a show in Reading in the late summer of 1951 (which was held in association with the Local Education Authority), an exhibition at Boltons Theatre in South Kensington in March 1952, and one at Better Books on the Charring Cross Road, London.<sup>295</sup> In August 1951 eleven hand-pulled prints were sold (with a 50% discount) to London County Council for their 'Homes for Old People' in Woodbury Down.<sup>296</sup> AIA members were encouraged to display works in their own locales and Leonard Rosoman, a contributing artist, organised a display in Edinburgh, probably at Edinburgh College of Art, in early 1952.<sup>297</sup> In London, there were also sales through more traditional spaces, with an exhibition held in the AIA's own Gallery in Lisle Street, Soho, and a selection at the Redfern Gallery, with its tradition of print retailing, taken on a sale-or-return basis.<sup>298</sup> Further attempts at innovation seem to have been aimed primarily at finding buyers, with an orientation towards a more moneyed or international clientele. Displays were organised at Eton, at major airports (when air travel

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original plan and notes the display will be interrupted by publicity for a forthcoming ballet season (V&A Archive, ACGB/121/615).

<sup>294</sup> The *Daily Telegraph*, 3 April 1952, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/16/2.

<sup>295</sup> See minutes of Central Committee 11 Sept 1951, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043.2.25 and correspondence with venues (TGA 7043/2/26/17 and TGA 7043/2/26/15). The Reading exhibition seems to have been of the hand-pulled edition, as it was not organised by School Prints.

<sup>296</sup> Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/2/26/36.

<sup>297</sup> Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/2/26/102.

<sup>298</sup> Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/2/26/56 and TGA 7043/2/26/59.

was a luxury) and in California, through the dealership at the Pebble Beach Art Gallery.<sup>299</sup>

Overall, efforts at distribution seem to have been spirited but ad hoc.<sup>300</sup>

The AIA's attempt to place democratisation at the core of the 1951 series through a large edition was thus compromised in practice both by the partnership with the Arts Council and by a degree of organisational dysfunction, itself rooted in the fractured political context of the post-war British left. Nonetheless, the production history for the series shows the ideal of broadening access to art ownership, in particular through lithography, continuing to shape the field, just as a perception of prints as 'the poor man's picture gallery' continued to shape prints' reception, even with a more overtly fine-art, limited edition. Griffiths – arguing for the demise of the democratising ideal by the early 1950s – cites as additional evidence the way that a further lithograph series, this time celebrating the Coronation in 1953 and published by the RCA, was issued strictly as a limited edition with fifty impressions for each image. The artists involved – one again led by La Dell – thus seemed to have entirely abandoned any interest in a large, low-cost edition. However, the origins of this new series again complicate such an interpretation. An unsigned note to AIA office holders (undated, but presumably from 1952) shows that proposals for a Coronation series were developed within that organisation. The idea was for twelve images, each in an edition of 1,000 and to be sold at the low price of £0/12/6d (the same as the School Prints

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<sup>299</sup> For Eton, see Uhlman to James, 25 October 1951 (V&A Archive, ACGB/121/615); for airports see the same letter and that of 13<sup>th</sup> July and the October 1951 Newsletter (TGA7043/21/33) as well as related correspondence (Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/2/26/116; TGA 7043/2/26/12). After initial reluctance on account of their size, W.H. Smith stocked prints at Northolt and London airport (as this correspondence is with the AIA, these seem likely to have been the hand-pulled editions, but machine-lithos were also sold through their airport branches, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/2/26/45; TGA 7043/2/26/24).

<sup>300</sup> See Appendix 5 for further details.

edition in 1951).<sup>301</sup> The similarity of the proposal to the initial Festival of Britain scheme makes it likely that La Dell was again the author, and that he turned to the RCA only when, for whatever reason, publication proved impossible within the AIA. The use of RCA facilities, technical staff and materials would then necessarily limit edition size. Even if this scenario is considered speculative, it is clear from the AIA note alone that the idea of the low-cost, large edition remained an ambition for some associated with the organisation, despite, in this case, it remaining unrealised.

The RCA's *Coronation Lithographs* are the subject of the next chapter. Returning to the AIA's 1951 series, its origins and publication history have shown how, although the popular front politics that underpinned production of the *Everyman Prints* were no longer operative, a commitment to affordability through prints remained – even if that commitment's delivery was now somewhat ad hoc and the new purchasers primarily a wider middle class. The images of the *1951 Lithographs* were thus created (and looked at) in the expectation of a broader audience than that for easel paintings. In the following two sections, I want to consider some further images from the series and in particular how these can deepen and complicate our understanding of Festival of Britain themes. In the last part of the chapter, I then argue that these images, alongside the continued commitment to a democratising agenda inherited from the late 1930s, can contribute to a reconceived notion of welfare state culture.

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<sup>301</sup> 'AIA Lithographs', Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/17/40.

### The ‘new, alien, occupying power’: the *AIA 1951 Lithographs* and Political Polarisation

A short, laudatory (and anonymous) review of the lithographs in the October 1951 edition of the *Studio* took the opportunity to make its author’s own point about post-war artistic options: ‘Bright, breezy and unpretentious, they prove that art can be good *and* cheerful’.<sup>302</sup> This mixture of qualities found in the AIA pictures had much in common with the Festival organisers’ own aims: that events should illustrate high standards – of design, of British achievement – but in a way that was inclusive and with an admixture of fun. Such alignment between Festival and lithographs has been traced in relation to the images by Trevelyan and La Dell, but also illuminating in this context is Sheila Robinson’s *Fun Fair* (Figure 30). While this is one of the more overt treatments of working-class leisure in the series, the fair had itself become something of a cultural battleground, giving the picture added symbolism. Since J.B. Priestley’s essay ‘Blackpool’ was published in *An English Journey* in 1934, champions of British traditions had been critical of an increasing Americanisation of the traditional fair’s aesthetic: the later taken as rooted in folk culture, the former as merely commercial. In its depiction of side-shows and decorated stalls, Robinson’s image, can thus be read as endorsing the Festival’s interest in craft traditions which was seen, for example, in the corn dolly figures of the lion and unicorn in their eponymous pavilion.<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> The *Studio*, October 1951, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/16/2; italics in the original. The critic’s implicit view that artistic quality had become equated with pessimism in 1951 does not obviously sit with the various Arts Council contributions to the Festival.

<sup>303</sup> Though it should be acknowledged that American rides were imported to the Festival’s own variant on the fair, the euphemistically titled Battersea Pleasure Garden (see Conekin, *An Autobiography*, 209-11).



A more ambiguous response to Festival themes than that found in the images of La Dell, Trevelyan or Robinson inhabits James Boswell's *The Winning Side* (Figure 31). Among the artistic personnel of the 1951 series, Boswell represented the sole point of continuity with the *Everyman Prints*. For the earlier series he had provided *Hunger Marchers in Hyde Park* and *Candidate for Glory*, pictures which, unusually, retained the tropes of left-wing oppositional politics into the wartime context of 1940. This reflected Boswell's own political commitment: he had been an early member of the AIA, having joined the Communist Party in 1932 and, although trained as an easel painter, had made his name in the 1930s through satirical and observational lithographs sold to the public but also published as illustrations in the *Left Review* and *Daily Worker*.<sup>304</sup> By the turn of the 1950s, however, Boswell's artistic and political life were both in flux.<sup>305</sup> In 1947, he resigned as a senior art director for Shell and published *The Artist's Dilemma*, a reflection on the state of art education and the art market and, in particular, the poor conditions and debilitating compromises imposed on the commercial artist.<sup>306</sup> In 1950, he also lost a role as art editor with the collapse of the small-circulation magazine *Lilliput*, and shortly afterwards began to reinvent himself as an abstract painter. His Communist Party membership seems to have lapsed around 1946, and

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<sup>304</sup> For Boswell's own recollections of the founding of the AIA see Morris and Radford, *The AIA*, 9. For Boswell's biography see Melinda Kelly Johnston, 'Protest Prints: satire and social and political commentary in the prints of James Boswell, 1906-1971', unpublished PhD thesis, UCL, 2010; Paul Hogarth, 'Eyewitness of the Thirties', *James Boswell 1906-71: Drawings, Illustrations and Paintings*, exhibition catalogue, Nottingham University Art Gallery, 22<sup>nd</sup> November – 16<sup>th</sup> December 1976; William Feaver, 'Introduction', *Boswell's London*, London: Wildwood House, 1978; Graham Stevenson, 'James Boswell', *Encyclopaedia of Communist Biographies*, <https://grahamstevenson.me.uk/2010/05/30/boswell-james/>, accessed 14<sup>th</sup> January 2020; Sal Shuel, 'Life', [www.jboswell.org.uk](http://www.jboswell.org.uk), accessed 14<sup>th</sup> January 2020. For his post-war work see Nead *The Tiger*, 301-04.

<sup>305</sup> During the war, Boswell served as an officer in Iraq, reaching the rank of Major. For his war drawings see William Feaver, *James Boswell, Unofficial War Artist London. Scotland. Iraq 1939-1945*, London: Muswell Press 2007.

<sup>306</sup> James Boswell, *The Artist's Dilemma*, London: Bodley Head, 1947, reprinted at <http://www.jboswell.org.uk/ad0.php>, accessed 14<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

contemporaries recall a left-winger's disillusion with the practical realities of Labour in power but also an increasing disconnection from political life in general.<sup>307</sup>

A consistent feature of Boswell's lithography was ironic titling and *The Winning Side* continued this tradition.<sup>308</sup> Like La Dell, Boswell chose a sporting subject and, like Robinson, a scene of working-class leisure. Unlike La Dell's sun-bathed setting, however, Boswell's action takes place in the rain: a wet and miserable footballer stares, without enthusiasm, at action taking place at the other end of the pitch; an exaggerated perspective stretches the width of the goalposts and the sodden pitch, isolating the foreground player from his two fellows and the sparse but undifferentiated set of spectators (and their dogs) set in front of forbidding hills. And this miserable, lonely inactivity, Boswell's title tells us, is the lot of some on the *winning side*. This is, of course, a joke on his part, but in 1951 the joke also had the potential to open a wider, metaphorical interpretation. Some ex-soldiers had felt a disappointment in the country they returned to from the first point of demobilisation. From the introduction of bread rationing in July 1946 to the winter energy crisis of 1947, the rewards of victory could seem utterly absent and without the compensation of wartime social solidarity. As late as the Coronation in 1953, the *Times* was regretting 'the exhaustion and the tiredness, the barrenness of the victory so far'.<sup>309</sup> Such a complaint could quickly take on a more party-political edge: despite Boswell's socialist allegiance, his passive, cross-

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<sup>307</sup> See in particular the recollections of James Friell, 'Remembered', <http://www.jboswell.org.uk/friell.php>, accessed 14<sup>th</sup> January 2020. According to Sal Shuel, Boswell played a role in publicity for Labour's 1964 election campaign.

<sup>308</sup> Along with *Candidate for Glory*, examples include *Backbone of England*, 1937, a picture of overweight, tipsy bourgeois, and *Welcome to the Great Metropolis*, 1938, a depiction of backyards behind a railway line (reproduced in the image annex of Johnston, 'Protest Prints').

<sup>309</sup> 'And After?', *the Times*, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1953, 13.

armed figures hint at the common Churchillian swipe at Labour Britain, soon to be deployed in the October 1951 election, as 'Queuetopia'.<sup>310</sup> While La Dell's *M.C.C. at Lords* invoked the balmy summers of the late 1940s, one response to Boswell's work was thus as a reflection on how victory in war, and perhaps the Labour victory in 1945 too, could begin to feel like a hard and unrewarding slog.

If Boswell was a critic whose political history lay on the left, deep antagonisms to Labour's programme of reform came from the political right. However, as noted, the narratives of the Festival attempted to obscure deep-seated ideological fracture, reframing political battles as a family squabble. Individual pictures within the *1951 Lithographs* could, however, give a vista onto exactly such fractures. In the late 1930s, the rhetoric of democratisation had proposed lithography as the ideal mediator between a popular audience and a new taste amongst artists for subject matter drawn from contemporary life. For the 1951 series, the suggestion that submissions might portray 'scenes of contemporary or historical life in Britain' seems to reflect a similar idea of combining popular prints with everyday subject matter. In the end, the resulting images largely offered contemporary scenes though these were barely marked by signs of contemporaneity and social realist content was largely absent, with the possible exception of James Sellars' *Sheffield Steel*. Nonetheless, by touching on contemporary life, contemporary dispute could also come into view if the images were interpreted in the context of specific current events or debates. This is a point that I develop in relation to Sellars' print and, afterwards, to Lynton Lamb's *Country House*.

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<sup>310</sup> Kynaston, *Family Britain*, 33.

A picture of steel manufacture had the potential to come across (intentionally or not) as a pastiche of politically committed Socialist Realism. Indeed, when Peggy Angus, a founding member of the AIA, had returned from a trip to the Soviet Union in 1932, she joked that while Soviet painters were not directed to their subjects they were gently steered away from adding to the glut of pictures showing a blast furnace.<sup>311</sup> However, Sellars' aestheticizing approach in *Sheffield Steel* works against such a reading as any more than a minor element (Figure 32).<sup>312</sup> More prominent is the loose, bold lithographic technique, used to convey an idea of intense heat with only a limited range of coloured inks. The picture is dominated by shades of red and orange, achieved by over-printing translucent colours. These colours are themselves broken into thick, mobile lines whether as roaring flames on the ceiling or puddled heat on the floor, the exception being the red patches of reflected flame in the workers' goggles which serve to make their faces strange. The only competing hues are the grey-green in the heavy insulating clothing of the workers and the grey-blue smoke swirling upward from the door of the furnace. The overall horizontal composition of the picture is established by the elongated tools used by the men to keep at a maximum distance from the source of heat. As a result, there is a degree of tension between the men aligned on the left and the heavy plant on the right, though both are held

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<sup>311</sup> Peggy Angus, unpublished lecture notes for a report to The National Society of Art Masters, 1932, quoted in Radford, *Art for a Purpose*, 19. Julian Trevelyan's contributed *Blast Furnaces* to *60 Paintings for '51* which foregrounds figures leaving a factory forming the middle-distance.

<sup>312</sup> Without using the term 'Socialist Realism', the *Architects' Journal* used its tropes in a critique of sculpture at the Festival, specifically Thomas Whalen's coal cliff at the Glasgow exhibition: 'Should we not have less high seriousness, in this Festival year, and more joyful love of life' (quoted in Atkinson, *The Festival*, 115).

by the enveloping heat and the men, in their protective suits and with their eyes obscured, have themselves taken on a mechanical character.

Born in 1927, Sellars was still in his earlier twenties, and in his last year as a student at the RCA, when the AIA canvassed for submissions to the series and he utilised the College's facilities to work on his entry.<sup>313</sup> His accepted image was unusual in its focus on work and unique within the series in its depiction of industry. However, like La Dell's portrayal of sport or Robinson's of the fair, this subject could be connected to wider Festival themes for, while the South Bank exhibition displayed technological advances in the Dome of Discovery, elsewhere productivity and traditional industry were to the fore. In particular, at the *Exhibition of Industrial Power* in Glasgow (a part of the centrally organised Festival) the focus was on heavy engineering and the site included 'Halls' of coal, of electricity and of steel.<sup>314</sup>

The period on the run up to the Festival had also, however, given the steel industry a particular symbolism beyond the traditional associations of heavy industry and these meanings would inevitably have had the potential to inform interpretation of Sellars' picture. In February 1951, the Iron and Steel Act, which had passed through parliament in 1949, took effect, bringing the principal iron and steel manufacturing companies into state

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<sup>313</sup> Sellars was selected through the competitive strand of the process, see Appendix 5; copies of *Sheffield Steel* in development are held in the RCA's archive of student work. Sellars went on to a successful career as a teacher of printmaking (notably at Southampton College of Art) and as an artist (best known for landscape work, in which he had some influence on the 'Brotherhood of Ruralists' in the 1970s (V&A Collections Search: *Sheffield Steel* Summary, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1105335/sheffield-steel-print-sellars-james/>, accessed 14<sup>th</sup> January 2020; *Six Original Printmakers*, exhibition leaflet, Clare Hall, Cambridge, 2016).

<sup>314</sup> Banham and Hillier (eds), *Tonic*, 152. For the theme of productivity see Atkinson, *The Festival*, 99.

ownership under the Iron and Steel Corporation of Great Britain. Labour's manifesto for the 1945 election had pledged a series of nationalisations which had then been largely accomplished in the government's first three years, including the Bank of England in 1946, coal in 1947 and the railways in 1948. However, the passage of the parliamentary Bill enacting iron and steel nationalisation in 1949 was significantly more contentious than its predecessors and made the fate of the steel industry central to the evolving ideological positions of both Labour and the Conservatives. As the Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, himself said: 'Of all our nationalisation proposals, only iron and steel aroused much feeling, perhaps because the hopes of profit were greater here than elsewhere'.<sup>315</sup>

For pragmatists within the government, the case for state ownership of iron and steel was ambivalent. While other industries subject to nationalisation were demonstrably failing in private hands, the iron and steel industry had seen significant investment and had generally good labour relations as well as the prospect of an imminent return to profitability.<sup>316</sup> Moreover, some in Cabinet, including the pragmatic Herbert Morrison, felt that the model of centralising nationalised industries that had been deployed to date had already run its course.<sup>317</sup> The positive argument for intervention was made in the boldly titled pamphlet *Steel is Power* from the Labour Research Department. This stressed the political and ideological case for action: on the basis of its electoral mandate the government

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<sup>315</sup> Quoted in Hennessy, *Never Again*, 202.

<sup>316</sup> Godfrey Hodgson, 'The Steel Debates', Michael Sissons and Peter French (eds), *The Age of Austerity*, London, 1963, 295-316, 302.

<sup>317</sup> This was reflected to an extent in the looser structure created by the 1949 Act, despite the opposition of the 'full-blooded nationalists' (Hennessy, *Never Again*, 337); for Morrison as the leading 'consolidator' see Morgan, *The People's Peace*, 71.

had a right to pursue the socialisation of major industries, including iron and steel. 'The battle for steel' the pamphlet asserted was 'the supreme test of political democracy'.<sup>318</sup> This emphasis on utilising political power to reach into private property for its own sake, combined with lobbying from private owners, spurred the Conservative's to a more principled and vociferous opposition than had been seen to date. Previous nationalisations had received only modest challenge and even some tacit support from their parliamentarians but, in contrast, the parliamentary debates on the Iron and Steel Bill in 1949 were raucous. The Conservative opposition was united behind its core arguments and its rhetoric culminated with Churchill's declaration that this nationalisation was 'not a plan to help our patient struggling people, but a burglar's jemmy to crack the capitalist crib'.<sup>319</sup> Looking back in 1963, Godfrey Hodgson claimed that, though parliamentary arithmetic meant the Bill was passed, this was the moment when Conservative MPs regained their morale and established the lines of their opposition to the immediate post-war settlement.<sup>320</sup> On the other hand, Labour's internal uncertainty and the strength of the opposition counter-attack meant that the Iron and Steel Act marked the climax of Labour's full-throated advocacy of nationalisation: the policy document, *Labour Believes in Britain*, produced ahead of the 1950 election, stated that 'Unless there is economic necessity, there is no need for always socialising whole industries'.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> Quoted in Hodgson, 'The Steel Debates', 301.

<sup>319</sup> Quoted in Hodgson, 'The Steel Debates', 309.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, 313-16.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, 316; see also Hennessy, *Never Again*, 335-36.

There is no explicit reference to this political context in Sellars' image. The industrial plant does not obviously bear out claims of recent private sector investment but nor does it appear outmoded while the men's protective clothing seems relatively contemporary (as well as giving them an otherworldly appearance).<sup>322</sup> Work, rather than questions of ownership, is placed at the centre of the image (and steel-making in 1951 was both a successful and a labour intensive industry).<sup>323</sup> Although it is difficult to be precise about which specific process is depicted, Sellars' has chosen a moment of visual drama and intensity with an emphasis on the dignity of labour.<sup>324</sup> As noted, the artist uses his pictorial resources to portray intense heat, but that heat is then endured by his figures and managed through their equipment for a productive purpose. The direction of gesture and gaze by the two foremost figures emphasises mutual working to achieve their aim (while the hidden, outward gaze of their companion seems both a challenge and an invitation to the viewer). The use of long-handled tools was itself a traditional part of the steelmakers' craft and their depiction here invokes an idea of continuity in manufacture, a rooting in the past but with continued relevance.

Sellars' blocky, slightly stylised figures thus offer a positive image of work and the (male) industrial worker (tough, skilled, mutually supportive and backed by a craft heritage) while avoiding clichés of the realist tradition. These same strengths can be read from the

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<sup>322</sup> These assessments are based on comparison with photographs reproduced in Geoffrey Howse, *A Photographic History of Sheffield Steel*, Stroud: History Press, 2011. Goggles do not seem to have been worn much before the 1950s, though a protective neck cloth (of the kind worn by the man to the left) was in common use by those pouring or working hot metal from the turn of the century.

<sup>323</sup> The steel and cutlery industries in Sheffield continued to employ 45,000 people as late as 1970; Howse, *A Photographic History*, 11.

<sup>324</sup> The closest analogue in Howse, *A Photographic History*, is the picture of forging at Brown Bayleys in the 1950s, used as an endpiece.



print into the wider steel industry, which Sellars gives both a history and a continuing vitality. There are no specific signifiers of the industry's nationalisation and it would be wrong to read the picture as a direct comment on that political act, though its treatment of steelmaking provides a symbol for Britain's recovery and the country's strength in an industry of traditional importance, supporting Festival narratives. Most importantly for my argument, however, simply by inviting consideration of such a contentious, recent event, the lithograph undermined the Festival conceit that the path to recovery had been, and could be, followed with placid national consensus.

The same point, though with a different inflection, can be understood from a consideration of Lynton Lamb's *Country House* (Figure 33). This is surprising, as in many ways the two prints seem to define the opposing poles of the 1951 series. In subject matter, in particular, Lamb's image stands in absolute contrast to Sellars', replacing town with country, industry with domesticity and paid labour with moneyed leisure. Thus, in *Country House* the foreground is dominated by verdant grass, long enough to half-hide a cat, while the picture's focal point is the grand house of the title, its gable end shining impressively in an intense, low sunlight.<sup>325</sup> In addition, however, a number of devices in Lamb's picture evoke a tone of melancholy that is also at odds with Sellars' more robust celebration of shared, productive labour. The single human figure is dominated by the architecture of the eponymous house and is shown retreating away from the viewer; her slight hunch of age

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<sup>325</sup> Lamb's *Country House* is based on The Old Rectory, Rectory Chase, Sandon, Essex (built in 1765) though composed to emphasise its isolation (a listed building entry is available at <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101264863-the-rectory-sandon#.XkUtFXd2vIU>, accessed 4<sup>th</sup> September 2020; Lamb lived in the village from 1940.

contrasts with the flourishing foliage, promising its eventual decay. The sky, meanwhile, threatens a shower from striated clouds and, though the house offers shelter, both the viewer and the woman (who might be its owner, though the hint of a path which she follows goes past it) are blocked from the door by the strong horizontal line of hedge.<sup>326</sup> The low sun and distinct shadows indicate late afternoon; it is a moment of change between parts of the day, as well as between weathers, that lends the scene an aura of timelessness.

Lamb's relationship to the project of publication also stood in contrast to Sellars'. As an established artist-designer, he was one of two non-AIA members invited to take part in the series at the suggestion of the Arts Council.<sup>327</sup> His reputation had been formed in the late 1930s, in part through solo exhibition of his paintings but in particular through his illustrations for Flora Thompson's successful novel *Lark Rise* (1939); he also had experience with single-sheet lithographs, having taken part in Contemporary Lithograph's second, 1938, series, producing, *Grand Union Canal*. Moreover, unlike *Sheffield Steel*, *Country House* was one of the pictures chosen to go into School Prints' large edition. There is no documentary evidence relating to this selection and it seems likely to have been influenced both by the clarity of Lamb's design and also, in the context of the Festival's stress on national identity, by its place in a native tradition (more English than British) of topographical prints portraying country houses, from the grandest to, as in Lamb's case, the more modest.<sup>328</sup> Peaking in the

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<sup>326</sup> The copy held by Tate Archive uses an orange brown, which gives a particularly threatening depth to dark skies. The School Prints edition, illustrated at Figure 33, lacks this colour but the sky remains darkly threatening. The Arts Council Collection impression has a lighter sky and shadow, though the suggestion of a shower remains, reinforced by the woman's raincoat.

<sup>327</sup> Lamb was a participant in *60 Paintings for '51*, for which he submitted, *Gravel Pits, Sandon* (a location near to The Old Rectory shown in *Country House*).

<sup>328</sup> The print by Keith Vaughan, also proposed by the Arts Council, did not enter the School Prints edition.

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, this was an established and in many ways conservative practice that was very much at odds with Sellars' expressive realism.<sup>329</sup> Any expectation that *Country House* would be particularly popular, however, was misplaced: it proved the least successful of the large-edition lithographs, perhaps reflecting aversion on the part of School Prints' core educational audience to its rather austere visual character and melancholy atmosphere.

Where *Country House* shared common ground with Sellars' *Sheffield Steel*, despite these multiple differences, was in representing a subject which, in 1951, was contested territory, though in this case more in terms of cultural than parliamentary politics. Like *Sheffield Steel*, the image thus had the potential to reference internal conflict rather than national consensus and, in this case, even to point to contention around the Festival itself.

Even before the war the financial unsustainability of the traditional country house had become apparent, owners complaining that houses were under sentence of death from taxation.<sup>330</sup> However, it was wartime requisitioning and neglect which caused substantial damage to the physical fabric of many country houses, with over one thousand, on one estimate, requiring demolition after 1945.<sup>331</sup> While this loss informs the eschatological romance seen in John Piper's well-known renderings of decaying grand architecture from during and after the war, its most prominent cultural monument and interpretation came

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<sup>329</sup> Historical country house prints were often colour or black and white lithographs and usually taken from paintings; well-known printmakers from the genre's zenith include William Woollett and James Basire.

<sup>330</sup> Adrian Tinniswood, *The Long Weekend: Life in the English Country House Between the Wars*, London: Jonathan Cape, 2016, 371-72.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, 373.

not visually but in literature, through Evelyn Waugh's novel *Brideshead Revisited*.<sup>332</sup> Indeed, Waugh was at the forefront of a wider strand of conservative commentary within which more was at stake in the fate of the country house than the preservation of buildings or parkland.<sup>333</sup> Rather, the very nature of the country was implicated. These houses were 'our chief national artistic achievement', a status they gained through their own quality as physical objects but also, critically, as the sites of a leisured, elite culture in which the highest expressions of humanity might be found.<sup>334</sup> As Alexandra Harris notes of *Brideshead Revisited*, 'Waugh's troubling implication is that sanctity resides in the exquisite taste of a leisured few', a taste made manifest in the country house and the forms of life it made possible.<sup>335</sup>

*Brideshead Revisited* was written during wartime and published in May 1945.

However, Waugh was explicit that his requiem was equally informed by his 'apprehensions of the social consequences of the peace', these being his forebodings about a post-war world informed by values of universalism and egalitarianism.<sup>336</sup> Such fears seemed to him to be realised in Labour's victory in July 1945, initiating what he later termed the 'locust years'.

<sup>337</sup> This, not wartime, was the moment of greatest threat to the British culture embodied in

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<sup>332</sup> Frances Spalding suggests that Piper may have been a partial model for *Brideshead Revisited*'s main character, Charles Ryder (*John Piper/ Myfanwy Piper: Lives in Art*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 210).

<sup>333</sup> Harris, *Romantic Moderns*, chapters 12 and 13, describes a similar combination of antipathy to the politics of the immediate post-war years and anxiety for the fate of the country house, as the embodiment of an alternative culture, in Elizabeth Bowen and Osbert Sitwell.

<sup>334</sup> Evelyn Waugh, 'Preface, 1959', *Brideshead Revisited*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981, 3.

<sup>335</sup> Harris, *Romantic Moderns*, 273.

<sup>336</sup> The quotation is from *Unconditional Surrender* and describes Major Ludovic's writing of 'The Death Wish', a fictionalised version of the writing of *Brideshead* (Evelyn Waugh, *Sword of Honour*, London: Penguin, 2001 (first published 1965), 613 and 628).

<sup>337</sup> Quoted in David Pryce-Jones, 'Towards the Cocktail Party', 213.

the country house, for now the enemy was inside the gate. His hostility to the Labour government was absolute and its democratic mandate insufficient for him to recognise its legitimacy. In a phrase he used in the story 'Tactical Exercise' from 1947, it was a 'new, alien, occupying power'.<sup>338</sup>

Waugh's refusal to accept Labour in power inevitably made him a prominent critic of the Festival of Britain, the government's foremost intervention to shape a new national culture. His 'contribution to the "Festival Spirit"' included 'a sour letter to *The Times* and a BBC broadcast making fun of the National Book League's exhibition of contemporary authors'.<sup>339</sup> Writing in 1963, Michael Frayn cast Waugh as the 'senior Carnivore' snapping at the 'herbivores' amongst the Festival organisers, but gaining no satisfaction:

Poor Evelyn Waugh. It was certainly not the Festival of his Britain. For those sections of the upper- and middle-classes of whose subconscious anxieties he is the curator the Festival marked the climax of a decade in which ... they had been watching – or thought they had been watching – the gestation of a monstrous new state, in which their privileges would be forfeit, their influence dissolved, and their standards irrelevant.<sup>340</sup>

The Festival was the birth of a full-blown welfare state culture and Waugh a leader in a deep conservative resistance to it.

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<sup>338</sup> The phrase belongs to the thoughts of the leading character, John Verney, but the reader is steered towards sympathy for him ('Tactical Exercise', 1947, reprinted in *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985, 165). The idea of Labour as occupying power was repeated in a retrospective essay for the *Spectator* in 1959, see Douglas Lane Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh: A Critical Biography*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1998, 248. Lane Patey also quotes Waugh's diary: 'The French called the occupying German army "the grey lice". That is precisely how I regard the occupying army of the socialist government'.

<sup>339</sup> Patey, *The Life of Evelyn Waugh*, 302.

<sup>340</sup> Frayn, 'Festival', 319.

Waugh's satirical novella of post-war politics and culture, *Love Among the Ruins*, emerged somewhat belatedly in 1953.<sup>341</sup> The story featured state supported euthanasia (actively embraced by its bored citizenry) conducted inside the 'Dome of Security', the main civic building of a fictional new town, 'Satellite City'. The Dome of Security's name and futuristic architecture (diverting attention from a town largely made of temporary huts) made unambiguous reference to the Festival's Dome of Discovery on the South Bank. Just as, for Waugh, the country house was the physical realisation and enabler of an aristocratic culture, so the architectural space of the South Bank embodied the Festival's insult to that culture. It marked the state's appropriation of the role of patron, broke with vernacular traditions in favour of some form of international modernism, and did both in order to provide a derided cultural enterprise: state-sponsored, mass urban leisure. By recasting the Dome of Discovery as the Dome of Security, Waugh hoped to prick its concrete bubble: its vaunted modern space was most appropriate to a totalitarian town hall.

Waugh's positioning of the country house as victim of Labour's 'occupying power', and a symbol of alternative values, was thus a salient piece of context for the reception of Lamb's lithograph in 1951. This does not mean, however, that Lamb's subject necessarily implied alignment with such a defined, conservative political position (which would certainly have been anomalous amongst a series of prints from the Artists' International Association). Indeed, features of Lamb's image suggest an alternative point of reference: the country house as deployed in wartime propaganda.

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<sup>341</sup> Reprinted in *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985, 177 – 223.

Adrian Tinniswood has noted the irony of wartime mistreatment, given how the country house as an ideal was mobilised after 1939 as the epitome of the nation's endangered values: of a quiet, Cotswold-type of England, 'ancient and romantic and ivy-covered – in contrast to the hard, mechanised inhumanity of the enemy'.<sup>342</sup> These were qualities that were later to be woven into the Festival of Britain's story of national character, 'quintessentially rural, individualistic to the point of eccentricity, above all humane and rooted in the past', and even the neo-Picturesque elements of the layout of the South Bank.<sup>343</sup> The features of this idea of the country house, remade for the inclusive narrative of wartime propaganda, are given visual realisation in Lamb's image. In scale, the building in *Country House* is more akin to Waugh's own neo-classical house, Piers Court in Stinchcombe, Gloucestershire, or his brother Alec's Queen Anne rectory at Edrington, Hampshire, than the baroque grandeur of the fictional Brideshead Castle.<sup>344</sup> In architecture, it emphasises the vernacular rather than the imported styles of either the classical or the baroque, with dormer windows, high chimneys and sharply pitched roof. From the print alone, the house is difficult to age with precision but is visibly old, matured into its rural setting. Moreover, any sense of exclusivity is moderated by an emphasis on eccentricity, whether architectural (in the outsize pilastered entrance hall) or personal (in the rain-coated figure who apparently walks her cat). Whether we interpret this figure as the house's owner or a passer-by, she

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<sup>342</sup> Tinniswood, *The Long Weekend*, 374.

<sup>343</sup> For the quotation, Tinniswood, *The Long Weekend*, 374. Atkinson assesses Picturesque revivalism (its transfer of concepts from the eighteenth-century country estate to twentieth-century urban planning; its influence on the vistas, variety and planting of the South Bank; and its reference to a tradition of 'Whiggish' politics) in *The Festival*, 65–70 and 97.

<sup>344</sup> For a discussion of Stinchcombe see Harris, *Romantic Moderns*, 256–58.

adds a note of vulnerability (slightly bent, possibly slightly damp, and aided by a walking stick) rather than proud possession or, on the model of Waugh, angry dispossession.

As *Country House* went on display with the other AIA 1951 lithographs in the Festival Hall, a second print by Lamb was also before the public in a straightforward large-edition format: this was his contribution to the second series of Lyons Lithographs, *The Shire Hall* (Figure 34). Though not overtly declared as a pair, *The Shire Hall* is visibly identifiable as a partner image to *Country House*. In composition, both images are dominated by a three-storey building with a central pediment, while a circular motif is placed at the focal point (a clock, in *The Shire Hall*; a bullseye window, in *Country House*). In mood, both evoke a degree of mystery in their self-contained figures while their titles generalise from their specific referent. Where there are contrasts between the two pictures, these are drawn with a deliberateness that emphasises the underlying relationship: a dominance of blue tones against a dominance of green; the depiction of county town against country park.

The subject of *The Shire Hall* itself is an everyday, urban landscape. This quotidian quality is underscored by its depiction of ordinary objects – street furniture, traffic signs – and the way its multiple figures disperse toward varied objectives. But the scene is also given a degree of poetic resonance and grandeur, both by the rich colouring of the night sky (the clock shows half past ten and lamps are lit) and, in particular, through its principal subject, the shire hall itself. The building's architectural language, its columns and pediment, connects it to Waugh's Piers Court, but here neo-classicism is repurposed, providing not a country house but the setting for local government. If, in *Love among the Ruins*, Waugh



created a sinister municipal intrusion in the guise of the Festival's modernist Dome of Discovery, here, Lamb imagines the embodiment of the local state as a beneficent presence, its classicism a solid, dignified bulwark standing against the passage of days.<sup>345</sup>

Considering *Country House* in the context of this second lithograph thus reinforces the interpretation of its subject already suggested from its own, internal elements. Lamb's mansion is not, on this view, the celebration of a uniquely important embodiment of national culture, threatened by the 'occupying power' of an illegitimate government, but rather simply one component of that culture, suitably complemented by municipal architecture and the civic pride that it embodies. Nonetheless, and as with Sellars' *Sheffield Steel*, reflection on the image and its subject could easily disrupt fictions of post-war national harmony by recalling the reality of determined opposition. Indeed, in this case – with its potential allusion to Waugh's recusant discourse in which national values and architecture were both vitiated by new, alien forms – the contentious nature of the Festival itself was brought into view. Lamb, along with Sellars and Boswell, thus produced an image for the *AIA 1951 Lithographs* in which figurative work was aimed at a broad audience and which honoured the request for 'scenes of contemporary or historical life in Britain'.<sup>346</sup> However, whilst in the cases of Trevelyan, La Dell and Robinson the same conditions resulted in work aligned with the theme and mood of the Festival, for the former three artists straightforward subject matter opened complex and, for Festival narratives, potentially

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<sup>345</sup> There is a Festival link to this subject in that sprucing up municipal buildings was a popular activity for local, voluntary events within the 1951 celebrations (Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation*, 160).

<sup>346</sup> The available evidence shows this rubric set for the open competition; it seems likely that a similar suggestion would have been made to an invited artist such as Lamb.

troubling considerations (whether this was intentional, as seems plausible in the case of Boswell, or not, as seems more likely with Lamb).

### **‘The most civilised nation on earth’: the *AIA 1951 Lithographs* and Britain’s Place in the World**

I have argued in the preceding section that it was the very focus on the domestic scene in the *1951 Lithographs* that brought the realities of political polarisation into consideration. One print in the series did, however, look away from Britain and take an overseas subject, though one within the bounds of a contracting British empire: John Minton’s *Jamaica*.<sup>347</sup> Recent analyses of the Festival more broadly have described its limited attention to the history of empire and the near absence of the contemporary Commonwealth from the official programme.<sup>348</sup> These facts have been interpreted against a complex context in which recent imperial retreats (with India, Burma and Sri Lanka achieving independence in 1947) were balanced by continuing commitments and the beginnings of significant commonwealth immigration. I look at Minton’s image, and how far it might trouble the Festival’s disavowal of empire, later in this section. However, I begin it with another print from the series and one which raised the question of how Britain might relate to the world in a different way: that is, as the work of an immigrant artist, in this case the German-born Fred Uhlman.

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<sup>347</sup> See Appendix 5 for the titling of this work.

<sup>348</sup> See, for example, Conekin, *The Autobiography*, Chapter 7; Jo Littler, ‘“Festering Britain”: the 1951 Festival of Britain, decolonisation and the representation of the Commonwealth’, Simon Faulkner and Anandi Ramamurthy (eds), *Visual Culture and Decolonisation in Britain*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006; and Nead, *The Tiger*, 199 – 213.

As has been seen, Diana Uhlman, Fred's wife, was the central figure at the AIA who pushed forward with the distribution and sale of the series. Indeed, its official launch was held at the couple's home on Downshire Hill, Hampstead in July 1951.<sup>349</sup> Fred Uhlman himself was primarily a painter whose printmaking practice was relatively limited, though his Festival lithograph was selected through the open competition, a testament to his technical competence. Like several other AIA contributors, he also took part in Lyons second series, again in 1951, but in that case his work was transcribed rather than autolithographed.<sup>350</sup> Whatever his experience, Uhlman's Festival print, *North Wales*, was both technically accomplished and characteristic of his wider work at the time (Figure 35). Among contemporary critics, he was typically categorised as a naïve painter, seemingly on the basis of his preference for defined blocks of colour (an advantage for lithography) and a loose approach to linear perspective, though they may also have been influenced by knowledge of his lack of formal training.<sup>351</sup> Such a stylistic characterisation certainly fitted *North Wales* well, with its bold and apparently simple design and some incongruities in its represented space (such as the excessive recession of the telegraph poles). Moreover, in terms of its subject, this location was the landscape with which Uhlman was best associated, in particular through the book *An Artist in North Wales*, which was published in 1946 and

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<sup>349</sup> See the launch invitation, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/2/26/3.

<sup>350</sup> Batchelor, *Tea and a Slice of Art*, 97; this was also true for Minton. Uhlman also exhibited lithographs at the *London Group Prints* exhibition, 1955.

<sup>351</sup> For example, a *Times* review of his 1956 solo show described him as 'the most polished of primitives' (Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 992/8/5). Uhlman had begun to paint while living in Paris in his early thirties but was clear about his own desire to be seen as a 'real painter' (Fred Uhlman, *The Making of an Englishman*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1960, 163). Although he lived in Britain as a professional painter (his first solo show was at the Redfern Gallery in 1943) he is probably better known today as the author of the novella *Reunion*, Adam Books, London: Vintage, 2015 (first published 1971).

comprised a selection of his watercolours and drawings.<sup>352</sup> These sketches had a strong resemblance to the later lithograph, in both cases Uhlman representing a generalised scene rather than a specific place.<sup>353</sup> A commentary for the book was provided by Clough Williams-Ellis, an architect with a public reputation as a preservation campaigner and critic of suburban ribbon development (as well as a North Wales landowner).<sup>354</sup> Williams-Ellis avoided a discussion of individual images, given their generality, and instead asserted the affinity of spirit he found between Uhlman's work and his own appreciation of the landscape and of those who made a living within it. He also took the opportunity for a digression in which he emphasised that, despite his reputation, he took a positive view of economic development in the North Wales, as long as this was sympathetic to its geography and traditions. The resulting mix of people, place and development was, in many ways, a precursor to the Festival's own narrative of economic progress rooted in local geography and tradition, and Uhlman's landscapes had thus already found an easy association with this story. Though the work of an immigrant artist, *North Wales* could thus readily be understood as congruent with the Festival's domestic – arguably parochial – celebrations.<sup>355</sup>

Further, Uhlman's status as a refugee could, in fact, encourage an understanding of his print as a tribute to British stability amidst Continental political turmoil. Uhlman had arrived in the country in 1936 when he was thirty-five. Though Jewish, the immediate

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<sup>352</sup> Fred Uhlman, with a commentary by Clough Williams-Ellis, *An Artist in North Wales*, London: Paul Elek, 1946.

<sup>353</sup> Uhlman's preference for working from memory is described in *The Making*, 164.

<sup>354</sup> Williams-Ellis was best known as the architect of Portmeirion and author of *England and the Octopus* (1928) a cri de cœur against unplanned development which had substantial public impact.

<sup>355</sup> For the Festival in Wales see Atkinson, *The Festival*, 104 and 119; Conekin, *The Autobiography*, 134-137.

Uhlman's vision of Wales was local and particular but not parochial: he noted the affinity he saw with Adriatic landscape (Uhlman, *An Artist*, 40) which I would suggest is visible in the work.

prompt for his flight from Nazi Germany three years earlier (initially to Paris) was fear of political, rather than racial, persecution: he had been an activist in the Social Democratic Party in Württemberg, where he practiced as a lawyer.<sup>356</sup> On arrival in Britain, he was primarily thought of as a German artist and a degree of ambiguity over his national categorisation continued (as late as 1959 he was included in the exhibition *The Continental British School of Painting*).<sup>357</sup> For an audience aware of Uhlman's refugee history, the scene of a bay surrounded by hills, as presented in *North Wales*, would potentially carry an additional weight of meaning: as a symbol of shelter and, more specifically, of the 'haven', in Uhlman's word, that Britain had afforded in the 1930s to some at least.<sup>358</sup> The personal consequences of finding refuge certainly remained salient for the artist: around the time of the Festival he revisited Stuttgart for the first time and, in the Jewish cemetery, raved with grief for the parents and sister who had remained in Germany to be murdered.<sup>359</sup> Moreover, despite his preference for bold colour and attractive landscape, manifested in *North Wales*, Uhlman saw his art as a response to 'the horrors of our age' but one made with a quiet voice which built order as a defence against chaos – music played with a lute not a trumpet, in his phrase.<sup>360</sup> An earlier, and relatively overt, attempt at such a response had

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<sup>356</sup> Uhlman's flight is described in his biography, Uhlman, *The Making of an Englishman*, 134.

<sup>357</sup> This was hosted by Bradford Art Galleries and Museums and by the AIA Gallery. In 1938 he had been included in an *Exhibition of German Twentieth-Century Art* at the New Burlington gallery (an exhibition he and Diana supported financially) and in 1939 founded the 'Free German League of Culture'.

<sup>358</sup> Uhlman, *The Making of an Englishman*, 203. Diana Uhlman was co-secretary of the Artist's Refugee Committee, in which Fred was also active, and they provided a (more or less) temporary home for several refugees (as detailed in Anna Müller-Härlin, 'An Unconventional Couple: Diana and Fred Uhlman and their Support for Exiled Artists', Monica Bohm-Duchen (ed.), *Insiders Outsiders*, London: Lund Humphries, 2019, 187–194). Coastal shelter was frequently depicted by Uhlman, Michael Rothenstein noting that the harbour was among his most 'familiar subjects' ('Portrait of the Artist', *Art News and Review*, 13<sup>th</sup> August 1949, 1); his Lyons print featured a benevolent-looking lighthouse at St Agnes, Scilly Isles.

<sup>359</sup> Uhlman, *The Making of an Englishman*, 135; the visit was in 1951 or 1952. Uhlman's parents were killed at Theresienstadt; his sister Erna may have committed suicide, with her child, during transport to Auschwitz.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

come in a set of drawings made whilst he was interned as an enemy alien in 1940 and that were published as *Captivity* in 1946.<sup>361</sup> A subset of these depict a narrative in which a small girl faces and finally overcomes atrocity and its perpetrators; she holds a balloon in her hand which flies defiantly over scenes of torture and execution and finally crowns her triumph (Figure 36). There is a visual echo of this balloon's shape and placing in the prominent sun of *North Wales*, its benign presence offering a further cue to appreciating the British coast as a place of safety and respite.

If Uhlman brought an outsider's eye to the Festival lithographs then his particular refugee experience, as it left its mark on *North Wales*, tended to confirm rather than challenge the Festival's idea of, and focus on, Britain. The lithograph is a visual correlate of the sentiment, if not the detail, of Uhlman's declaration that 'I have found not only a refuge but a real home in England, which I love more than any other country in the world. I believe that if tolerance, kindness, political maturity and fairness are the touchstones of civilisation, Great Britain is the most civilised nation on earth'.<sup>362</sup>

While Uhlman was an incomer, if one of several year's standing, John Minton had travelled abroad ahead of the Festival, first to France and then to Jamaica for the last four months of 1950. As his absence continued, La Dell became concerned that he would fail to

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<sup>361</sup> Fred Uhlman, introduced by Raymond Mortimer, *Captivity*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1946. Uhlman, *The Making of an Englishman*, 231, has the publication date as 1944, but this appears to be an error.

<sup>362</sup> Uhlman, *The Making of an Englishman*, 249. Uhlman's view of the country in his autobiography is not uncritical: it is shown as class-bound, snobbish and with strands of philistinism, reaction and anti-semitism; his own internment in 1940 is characterised as wasteful, incompetent and at times callous.

produce a print for the series at all and approached Boswell as a substitute.<sup>363</sup> In the end, and somewhat belatedly, however, a lithograph from Minton was published and one that referenced his recent Jamaican experience.<sup>364</sup> The centre of the picture, titled simply *Jamaica*, though also known as *Tropical Landscape*, is dominated by the ragged leaves of a wilting banana plant placed directly before the viewer (Figure 37).<sup>365</sup> Immediately behind is the trunk of what seems to be a palm, stretching above the print's top edge, its own fallen fronds littering the foreground. The only view to the middle-ground is at top-right where a screen of further palms blocks the distance, while below them the small figure of a black labourer, pushed to the picture's edge, appears to be cutting back vegetation, though his exact action is unclear. Minton had brought a large quantity of material back from the Caribbean and this, or work based on it, dominated his exhibited output over the next year, with his 1951 *Lithograph* just one element. As one of the country's most prominent younger artists, he was commissioned by the Arts Council for its *60 Paintings for '51* exhibition, for which he produced *Jamaican Landscape*, as well as for a mural in the Dome of Discovery, where he again drew on his Caribbean ideas in *Exploration*.<sup>366</sup> In September 1951 he also had a well-received solo exhibition of Jamaican pictures at the Lefevre Gallery, showing four oil paintings and thirty-eight watercolours.<sup>367</sup> Among the latter was *Banana Leaves* which is clearly identifiable as the basis for his lithograph, *Jamaica*, the latter showing only minor compositional changes to the foreground and the margin opposite the figure.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> La Dell to James, 31 August 1950, V&A Archive, ACGB/121/615.

<sup>364</sup> See Appendix 5, 'Selection'.

<sup>365</sup> For the print's title see Appendix 5, 'Content'.

<sup>366</sup> Lynda Nead notes that *Jamaican Landscape* was the only picture in *60 Paintings for '51* to depict the 'new' Commonwealth, a point which echoes my own in relation to the *1951 Lithographs (The Tiger, 235)*.

<sup>367</sup> Frances Spalding, *John Minton: Dance till the Stars Come Down*, Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 1991, 154.

<sup>368</sup> *Banana Leaves* is reproduced in black and white in Simon Faulkner, 'Late colonial exoticism: John Minton's pictures of Jamaica, 1950-1952', Simon Faulkner and Anandi Ramamurthy (eds), *Visual Culture and*

A developed critical analysis of Minton's Jamaican works has been made by Simon Faulkner. Faulkner interprets selected pictures in relation to an imagining of the island, available in early 1950s Britain, as a fantasy site of homosexual liberty, with Minton's figuration serving to 'eroticise the labouring bodies of Jamaican peasants'.<sup>369</sup> He also assesses Minton's pictorial vision as an example of a more general, and pervasive, 'late colonial exoticism'. This complex set of ideas added an anxious sense of looming historical change to the characterisation of colonised subjects as simple, pre-modern and living in a state of harmony with nature (while also subjected to the gaze – and control – of the coloniser, usually, by 1950, in the guise of a tourist).<sup>370</sup> Faulkner concludes that most of Minton's work is fully 'congruous with this construction of the exotic', but he also finds traces of recognition from the artist that the Jamaican scene resists his looking, and his representation, and that the 'authentic' Jamaica lies outside exoticist clichés of languor and natural bounty.<sup>371</sup> Two pictures, in particular, are interpreted as containing hints of this 'undertone' and both (though this link is outside Faulkner's consideration) are connected to the Festival of Britain: *Jamaican Landscape*, from *60 Paintings for '51*, and *Banana Leaves*, the source for *Jamaica* in the *1951 Lithographs*.

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*Decolonisation in Britain*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006, 91. Given the late production of the lithograph, and the possibility that *Banana Leaves* was painted in Jamaica, I have assumed that the watercolour came first. In the Third Programme broadcast that accompanied *150 Years of Lithography* (see the *Introduction*), Minton had disparaged lithographs reproducing works in another medium; nonetheless, several of his own lithographs are closely associated with paintings – even his print for the V&A in 1949, *Thames-Side* is closely related to a 1946 oil painting *Rotherhithe from Wapping*.

<sup>369</sup> Simon Faulkner, 'Homo-exoticism: John Minton in London and Jamaica, 1950-51', Tim Barringer, Geoff Quilley and Douglas Fordham, *Art and the British Empire*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007, 170 – 86.

<sup>370</sup> Faulkner, 'Late colonial exoticism', 71 – 72.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.



The key visual element of disquiet that Faulkner cites in relation to *Jamaican Landscape* is the way that its single foreground figure looks across the artist's own line of vision, refusing to register his presence and avoiding his gaze.<sup>372</sup> In *Banana Leaves*, and the same point therefore holds for *Jamaica*, the impenetrable density of foliage, pushed up to the picture plane like a screen, is understood as a metaphor for a similar refusal to open to the European outsider's gaze, a gaze which in the past (and in other pictures from Minton's 1950 trip) confidently encompassed long vistas of productive plantation. The very fecundity of Jamaica has become a sign of its otherness, perhaps even a cover for threat. The figure of the labourer, to the right hand side in *Jamaica*, might be taken to counter this interpretation: his labour marks continuity in colonial economic relationships and his efforts, the viewer may feel, will yet restore productive order to the estate (a point with particular salience for the contemporary British audience, given the totemic role of bananas in continuing food shortages).<sup>373</sup> Comparison with a further work, *Banana Plantation*, which was one of the oils on sale at the Lefevre Gallery show, backs this alternative understanding.<sup>374</sup> In the painting, a similar screen of drooping banana leaves (several individual shapes are near identical to *Banana Leaves/Jamaica*) covers half the foreground, while to its side two black males pose in colourful, dandified dress and, although one carries a machete, appear relaxed, leisurely, and with the potential for a homoerotic charge. The replacement of these figures with an active labourer in *Banana Leaves/Jamaica* thus

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<sup>372</sup> Faulkner backs tentative visual interpretation with quotation from an article Minton wrote for *Vogue* in November 1951. Linda Nead makes a similar argument in relation to the picture's subdued atmosphere, put in contrast to the colour of popular exoticism (*The Tiger*, 234).

<sup>373</sup> For the symbolic power of bananas see Hennessy, *Never Again*, 274, 332.

<sup>374</sup> *Banana Plantation* is reproduced as Plate XVI in Spalding, *John Minton*.

underscores the latter image's emphasis on productivity. Yet the visual evidence leaves this counter interpretation equally insecure and details of the portrayal of the labourer are more in line with Faulkner's proposal: though he is active, the purpose of the labourer's activity is unclear and possibly futile; he is far back from the blocking foreground screen while his diminutive size makes him appear a poor match for its profusion of palms and banana leaves. On this view, Minton remains a privileged outsider, exercising his power to observe and represent, but registers that his Jamaican subject may elude his vision and his control.

Despite the Festival organiser's emphasis on a domestically-focused Britishness, with *Jamaican Landscape* and *Jamaica* Minton brought two images of the new Commonwealth into its visual culture (if somewhat belatedly in the case of the lithograph). In both instances, the chosen image was, as Faulkner has discussed, less easily assimilable to the idea of Jamaica as an exotic colonial playground (an idea that remained culturally salient in the early 1950s) than most of the work he exhibited following his Caribbean trip. It would be overly speculative to see these choices as a deliberate provocation, a political gesture in the context of a wide audience and a government-sponsored event (and such a gesture would be out of character for Minton). Nonetheless, both the painting and the print did bring an ambiguity of mood along with their image of the Commonwealth: Jamaica was inscrutable, a source of anxiety as well as bananas. It was an ambiguity that matched national uncertainty, and internal dispute, over Britain's colonial legacy and the right path in continuing overseas engagement: while Labour had pursued economic modernisation in the remaining colonies under a rhetoric of partnership, and the Conservatives were soon to frame the Coronation in terms of a rejuvenated imperial mission, many in Britain simply

sought isolation from both foreign entanglements and Commonwealth immigrants.<sup>375</sup> Thus, while Uhlman's lithograph offered a reminder of how, in the recent past, Britain had stood as a haven of civilisation amidst European despair, Minton's print had the potential to reference both hard present realities and their historical roots in global imperial expansion.

### **The AIA 1951 Lithographs and 'Welfare State Culture'**

Historians writing about the Festival of Britain have teased from it an impressive range of issues and implications, from greater acceptance of modern design to the ultimate failure to secure a victory for the Labour Party in the election of October 1951. Recent work in cultural history has focussed on Festival narratives, whether expressed in text or object, and the way that these recast post-war British national identity in a social democratic mould, utilising the metaphor of the family – as well as the wider conceit of the land and its people – to give didactic shape to events that were also intended to be fun. Contemporary scholars have also perceived a cost to this focus on Britishness in a degree of parochialism and even a denial of the nation's colonial inheritance. Close looking at examples from the *AIA 1951 Lithographs*, informed by their context, has offered some evidence to support such interpretations of Festival narratives. Uhlman's *North Wales* was a powerful addition to those exhibits in *The Lion and the Unicorn* pavilion which proclaimed British political traditions of liberty, incrementally achieved; Trevelyan and La Dell's images captured the wider mood of current pleasure and future promise in a national life underpinned by family,

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<sup>375</sup> Labour's policy – intended to benefit Britain as much as the colonies themselves – is discussed further in Chapter 4, in relation to work by Merlyn Evans; the Coronation is discussed in the next chapter. Wendy Webster identifies three narratives of Empire at this time: the 'people's Empire'; imperial assertion; and 'little England' nativist isolationism (Wendy Webster, *Englishness and Empire, 1939-1965*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, 7).

civility and shared experience. The prints by Boswell, Sellars, Lamb and Minton offered potential reminders of dissatisfaction, strife and anxiety but in each case within an attractive aesthetic surface and without the explicit social satire or oppositional politics seen in the 1930s.

This broad alignment of the series' images and the Festival's themes was matched by a shared commitment to democratising access to art. As has been seen, this was a commitment that remained central to the way La Dell and his colleagues conceived the lithograph project in 1951 and it also underwrote the Festival as a whole. In addition to the democratising rhetoric surrounding activities such as the 'London Season of Arts', discussed above, other visual art elements within the official Festival programme also addressed a broad audience, if in different ways to the lithographs. Statues and murals on the South Bank site represented a form of temporary public art, generally large in size and free to the visitor.<sup>376</sup> The Arts Council's *60 Paintings for '51* exhibition commissioned large easel paintings, quite distinct from the lithographs, but here too there was an emphasis on a wide audience: not only did the exhibition tour extensively, but the expressed hope was that paintings might be bought for public buildings, whether by government or private sector clients.<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> As noted, the South Bank commissions engaged many of the same artists as the *1951 Lithographs* (and there was also an overlap in personnel with *60 Paintings for '51*).

<sup>377</sup> The exhibition started at Manchester City Art Gallery and, in addition to the RBA Galleries in London took in ten cities from Bristol to Newcastle (James Hamilton, *25 from 51: Paintings from the Festival of Britain*, exhibition catalogue, Mappin Art Gallery, Sheffield, 17 May – 2 July 1978, 33).

Anne Massey has given attention to the Festival of Britain, and to *60 Paintings for '51* in particular, as a way of exploring a broader phenomenon that she terms 'welfare state culture' (as I noted in my *Introduction*).<sup>378</sup> In Massey's description, this culture enjoyed government sponsorship throughout the 1940s and 1950s as part of an attempt at the top-down construction of national character that reached its climax in 1951 (and her conception thus echoes other literature on Festival narratives referenced above). She sees it as characterised by an emphasis on heritage and tradition, on the rural and the regional, and on the products of individual craft rather than mass production; while it appropriated elements of pan-European modernism, this was to neuter them for its own humanist and nationalist ends. Massey further suggests that welfare state culture's principal expression in visual art was neo-Romanticism but she also finds its key characteristics in the painting, sculpture, architecture and design of the Festival, the atmosphere of which, she asserts, was not merely parochial but chauvinistic and xenophobic. As evidence for the cultural force possessed by such values, she describes the scandal caused by William Gear's *Autumn Landscape*, an abstract painting of spiky black lines dividing patches of autumnal colour and the one work in *60 Paintings for '51* seen as stepping outside the framework of welfare state culture, despite its receipt of one of five Arts Council purchase prizes. *Autumn Landscape* was widely denounced in press articles, letters to the editor (including from established artists) and in a question to Parliament.<sup>379</sup> It was portrayed as a rejection of British artistic tradition – in favour of Parisian fashion – and an affront to the preferences of the average citizen; moreover, Massey notes, its aesthetic modernism was explicitly associated with a

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<sup>378</sup> Massey, *The Independent Group*, Chapter One: *Welfare State Culture*.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*, 16. The *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Telegraph* led the charge.

left-wing, even revolutionary, politics.<sup>380</sup> The terms in which Gear's painting were condemned thus revealed the qualities which welfare state culture valued. Similar characterisations of the dominant mood of the period are made in other art-historical writing; David Mellor, for example, sees the Festival as typical of a post-imperial, 'welfareist civic culture'.<sup>381</sup> Massey's particular purpose is to provide a ground against which to contrast her main interest, the ideas and work of the Independent Group, meeting from 1952. In this, her work contributes to a wider, teleological narrative in writings on post-war British art (that I noted in my *Introduction*) in which the immediate post-war years are understood as a preparation or a foil for the internationally successful work that followed. It is a narrative found in work by Mellor and Martin Harrison, for example, and in Alex Seago's work on the RCA which is discussed further in the next chapter.

My reasons for rehearsing Massey's conception of welfare state culture in this discussion of the *AIA 1951 Lithographs* are twofold. Firstly, it discourages reflection on work from the immediate post-war period that might be assigned to this culture, including the AIA series, contributing to a neglect of these pictures (and in this it is typical of the wider, teleological tendency in existing historiography). I thus want to be explicit that the interpretations of individual prints already made in this chapter are offered as a counter to

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<sup>380</sup> Ibid., 1, 16; James Hamilton, *25 from 51*, 8.

<sup>381</sup> David Mellor, 'Apocalyptic Visions: British Art in the 1940s and 1950s', *Blast to Freeze: British Art in the Twentieth Century*, Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, 14<sup>th</sup> September 2001 – 19<sup>th</sup> January 2002, 107 – 112, 110. For Mellor official optimism was undermined by the pessimism of Gear, Lucien Freud and others whose pictures in *60 Paintings for 51* embodied an "'age of anxiety'". There was significant contemporary hostility to the welfare state from cultural figures, Kingsley Amis noting in 1957 that 'the welfare state, indeed, is notoriously unpopular with intellectuals' (quoted in Bryan Appleyard, *The Pleasures of Peace: Art and imagination in post-war Britain*, London: Faber, 1989, 95). This ran across the political spectrum (Herbert Read and J.B. Priestley also being implicated) and seems to have rested on its bureaucracy and the simple lack of heroic grandeur in its ameliorative outcomes.

this trend and as a demonstration of the interpretive possibilities these works can offer when given a historically informed attention. Secondly, I want to go on to argue below that, while Massey's description of welfare state culture has weaknesses, the coinage itself is, nonetheless, a useful one. Indeed, the AIA series can help to develop a richer re-conception of the term. In such a revised version, the concept of welfare state culture can reverse its effect, directing attention towards the full range of art produced in the post-war period and its relations to the particular context.

In positing a dominant, conservative tradition against which modernist radicals could successfully rebel, Massey's historical description ignores several complexities. The conservative newspapers that criticised Gear, and in particular his receipt of public prize money, for example, had, in fact, also provided a platform for critics of the Festival and its allegedly extravagant spending. The attacks on Gear were thus an extension of this same campaign against (not *for*) a government active in cultural life as an element of the welfare state (a campaign already noted in discussing Evelyn Waugh's hostility to the Festival). Similarly, for aesthetic conservatives, the whole of *60 Paintings for 51*, not solely Gear's abstraction, was an example of hostility to tradition on the part of the state acting as patron. A review of the exhibition in *Apollo* damned the new mandarins for whom, 'Art means Modernism ... The public must be educated, or away with them to the Fun Fair'.<sup>382</sup> Both political and aesthetic conservatives were thus hostile to welfare state culture rather than part of its continuum and they delivered a constant sniping. Nor should contemporary commentators' rhetorical equivalence between modernism and the political left be taken at

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<sup>382</sup> *Apollo*, May 1951, quoted in James Hamilton, *25 from 51*, 34; the 'Fun Fair' is a reference to the Battersea

face value; the pre-war modernist but politically conservative tradition in literature, for example, which encompassed such figures as Waugh and T.S. Eliot, remained strong.<sup>383</sup>

More generally, Massey does not make any specific link between her conception of welfare state culture, or the manifestations of it she describes which are themselves projected back to 1940, and the policies and actions that created a system of welfare for citizens between 1945 and 1951 and which were carried out by a government of the left.<sup>384</sup> While something more definite seems to be implied by the formulation, it is not clear what makes this the culture of the welfare state beyond a coincidence in time.

Although Massey's description captures important aspects of the post-war moment, her claims for the features and extent of welfare state culture are thus not always convincing. It is in this context that the *AIA 1951 Lithographs* can inform an alternative and less dismissive way to use the same term, so that it highlights dimensions of interest in the period's art rather than obscuring them, in particular drawing attention to links with the wide-ranging historiography of the post-war settlement. In this re-conception, welfare state culture can be seen to be embodied in a visual art that was popular, modern and sympathetically engaged with the development of social democracy in Britain – an art that could be readily accommodated within the particular space of prints.

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<sup>383</sup> Modernism in British visual art had included a (potentially) proto-fascist element in its birth – via Vorticism – though this had faded. Within the Independent Group (Massey's main subject) some, such as Alloway, leaned to the right (Seago, *Burning the Box*, 172).

<sup>384</sup> Modernist gestures such as Gear's are perceived as coming from the left and at the same time as oppositional to welfare state culture; however, this tension is not discussed in any detail, beyond acknowledgement of the paradox of modernism in the 1930s that was both avowedly elitist and of the left (Massey, *The Independent Group*, 4).



Efforts at democratising access to art ownership provide one clear connection between the *1951 Lithographs* and the principles of the welfare state, the print series attempting to bring art into the set of goods being made available to a wider citizenry (and such specific connections are absent in Massey's characterisation, as noted). The government's own approach to democratisation, with the Arts Council at its core, was undoubtedly paternal and adhered to a belief that quality and value were located in traditional, high-art forms. The AIA's 1951 project, itself subsidised by the Arts Council, was in this mould, even if the Council showed suspicion of lithographs: the AIA organisers simply assumed that reaching a wider market with the work of professional artists was worthwhile, offering an opportunity unavailable to those who could not afford paintings (whether through the limited or unlimited edition of the prints).<sup>385</sup> However, as explored above, the origins of the *1951 Lithographs* lay in the *Everyman Prints*, emphasising that there was also continuity with activities of the late 1930s driven by the political left, though now a position of opposition was exchanged for an official imprimatur. Such a democratising initiative should thus not be framed solely in terms of a post-war consensus, rather it also drew on a radical, pre-war tradition, adapting it to a new context (my discussion of the extended middle-class audience for the marketing of the *Everyman Prints* notwithstanding).<sup>386</sup> Nor was the institutional context of the visual arts obviously amenable to such a project in 1951: the production and distribution history of the series demonstrates that delivery still needed energy and persistence for uncertain success.

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<sup>385</sup> Other AIA activities at the time did, however, promote the work of amateur artists, notably the mixed exhibition, *The Coalminers* in 1950 (Radford, *Art for a Purpose*, 160).

<sup>386</sup> There are parallels here with Kristin Bluemel's notion of a distinct 'intermodern' period in literary culture linking the 1930s to the 1950s (discussed in my *Introduction*).

In terms of the images within the series, a significant diversity of style was accommodated, though within limits. The set as a whole was looked on by contemporaries as modern (*Art News and Review* described it as encompassing 'contemporary' trends) though this might itself be seen to reflect the timidity of critical taste.<sup>387</sup> Perhaps the most overt claim to stylistic innovation was Laurence Scarfe's *Bird Boy*, with its Picasso-flavoured design of a classical profile among pigeons (Figure 38), though Keith Vaughan's *Dancers* (Figure 39) was notable for its lack of pictorial depth. As has been seen, Lamb, amongst others, looked to a careful rendition of varied tones and textures while La Dell and Sellars used a free application of lithographic media to the plate which served their expressive intent. All the work, however, is representational and easily read, with modern touches restrained within familiar formats. Given the AIA's guidance for entries to the series, 'scenes of contemporary or historical life in Britain would be appropriate', this emphasis seems to have been part of an overarching attempt to reach a wide audience, continuing the association of popular prints with the representation of the passing scene discussed in relation to the *Everyman Prints*. There is a similar diversity in the subjects represented, as the comparison of *Sheffield Steel* and *Country House* has emphasised. Nonetheless, as my analysis of specific images in this chapter has attempted to show, several could be understood in terms of themes promoted by the government through the Festival of Britain (such as the value of the family or the nation's internal hospitality) and works such as *Sheffield Steel* and *Country House* could be understood as broadly congenial to Labour's

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<sup>387</sup> *Art News and Review*, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1951, 6.

positions, even if the very act of depicting contemporary life could draw attention to the deep political schisms and anxieties which the Festival ignored.

It is from this combination of popular form and a sympathetic response to the aims and actions of the post-war Labour government that an alternative conception of welfare state culture can be drawn, at least in relation to visual art. This culture potentially encompassed more than prints, but the *1951 Lithographs* were an ideal site for its realisation and illustrate its features.<sup>388</sup> Widened access to art ownership was an aspiration of the series' organisers and one that was rooted in pre-war activity and aligned with the philosophy of the welfare state. This commitment meant that the prints tended to inhabit a relatively familiar set of stylistic options though these appeared modern, not conservative, to the contemporary audience. The representational approaches that resulted were then used (primarily, though not in every case) to depict aspects of contemporary life and in ways that were neither inherently nostalgic nor conveyed a narrow, sentimental nationalism. Rather, they offered a broadly positive view of the nation and of its social and cultural direction but also a rich set of interpretative possibilities that engaged with the complexities of their moment, including the fragility of the post-war settlement and opposition to it, in particular from the right. Though prints thus offered a particularly amenable space for such images, the example of the *1951 Lithographs* can be generalised to give a broader concept of welfare state culture characterised by concern for democratisation, by a modern – if not modernist – style, and by a broad alignment with Labour's programme of national reform (and also, therefore, its problems). Attention to the print series helps to delineate this

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<sup>388</sup> Similar observations might potentially be extended to, for example, selected South Bank commissions.

concept and, in turn, identification of a revised idea of welfare state culture helps reframe the art of the period within its own terms.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART CORONATION LITHOGRAPHS:**  
**CELEBRATION AND TENSION IN PICTURING THE CORONATION OF 1953**

When, in November 1951, David Eccles was appointed Minister of Public Buildings and Works in Churchill's new Conservative administration, among his early acts was to order the demolition of those remaining buildings on the Festival of Britain's South Bank site. Though ostensibly a practical move, the symbolism was clear: the conception of Britain promoted at the Festival was now to be undone. Just a few months later, Eccles had the opportunity to shape a new and different national celebration when he became the government's lead representative in planning for the Coronation of Elizabeth II, following her father's death in February 1952. Though focussed on a single day, Tuesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1953, this too was to be an event on an ambitious scale – the greatest procession that London had ever seen.<sup>389</sup>

For contemporaries, and for subsequent historians, Eccles' position as both Festival undertaker and Coronation mid-wife was emblematic of how the spectacle of 1953 was staged by its government sponsors as a conscious reaction to that of 1951. Thus, while the Festival had aspired to devolution and national inclusivity, the Coronation doubled as a celebration of London as a capital city, utilizing the architectural backdrop of Buckingham Palace and Admiralty Arch that had been designed for royal display during the imperial high-

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<sup>389</sup> This description is taken from Conrad Frost, *Coronation, June 2 1953*, London: Arthur Baker Limited, 1978, 124; Frost describes a crowd of over a million on the procession route on the preceding Saturday. For more recent descriptions of the scale of the event, see Mort, *Capital Affairs*, 'Chapter 1: Majesty'; Webster, *Englishness and Empire*, Chapter 4: 'Coronation Britain'; and Conekin, Mort and Waters, 'Introduction', Conekin, Mort and Waters (eds.), *Moments of Modernity*, 1-3.

water mark earlier in the century.<sup>390</sup> The procession and the service at Westminster Abbey – the heart of the Coronation – replaced the Festival’s egalitarianism with a display of social hierarchy, and the national family with loyal troops from distant territories.<sup>391</sup> An emphasis on heroic, individual achievement was serendipitously underlined with the news of the conquest of Everest by the New Zealander Edmund Hillary with the Nepalese Tenzing Norgay. For those conservative commentators who had seen the preceding six years, culminating in the Festival, as an inauthentic expression of the nation’s values by an over-reaching state, such contrasts in the shape of the celebrations were part of a hope for wider change, for a turn back from ‘levelling’, in the contemporary words of A. L. Rowse, to traditional ‘standards’ in both society and culture.<sup>392</sup> The monarch was central to this reversion, leading some commentators to detect a strand of alien ‘servility’ towards the crown in the national mood.<sup>393</sup> None of this is to say that all of the Coronation’s promoters simply sought a return to the *status quo ante bellum*. For some there was an emphasis on the new in the ‘New Elizabethanism’, while the young Queen, at twenty-seven, was presented as a symbol of youth and optimism. Nevertheless, the Coronation invoked a

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<sup>390</sup> See Mort, *Capital Affairs*, 31 – 32; Buckingham Palace was completed in 1850, but the façade and other aspects remodelled in 1913.

<sup>391</sup> See Heather Wiebe, “‘Now and England’: Britten’s *Gloriana* and the “New Elizabethans””, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 17: 2, July 2005, 141-172, 147. The language of the Coronation largely eschewed Empire in favour of a mutually supportive Commonwealth, arguably to maintain elements of an imperial claim amid the realities of decolonisation (Webster, *Englishness and Empire*, 94 – 104).

<sup>392</sup> From A. L. Rowse, *An Elizabethan Garland*, 1953, quoted in Wiebe “‘Now and England””, 149. See also Irene Morra, ‘New Elizabethanism: Origins, Legacies and the Theatre of Nation’, Irene Morra and Rob Gossedge (eds), *The New Elizabethan Age: Culture, Society and National Identity after World War II*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2016, 21.

<sup>393</sup> The term was used retrospectively by the progressive Conservative John Grigg, quoted in Helen Phillips, ‘Young Elizabethans, Young Readers and an Incomplete Vision’, Morra and Gossedge, *The New Elizabethan Age*, 197. At the time, Sebastian Haffner noted how Britain became ‘not simply loyally monarchist’ but ‘monarchy conscious to a degree which calls for some special consideration’ (quoted in Conekin, Mort and Waters, ‘Introduction’, 2). A critique of the trend was offered by Kingsley Martin in *The Crown and the Establishment* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965).

different mixture of elements from the nation's past and potential future to those that had been highlighted by the Festival.

As I noted in my *Introduction*, the proximity of these two events, and their apparent contrast in mood and meaning, have been widely used by historians to organise post-war British history, demarcating the end of a period of social-democratic experiment (itself rooted in wartime) in a way that pointed to deeper trends than were visible in Labour's narrow election loss in October 1951.<sup>394</sup> Robert Hewison has given this narrative its most succinct expression: 'the socialists' "New Britain" had hardly had time to establish itself when it was replaced by the "New Elizabethan age".<sup>395</sup>

Among those buildings cleared from the South Bank under Eccles' direction was *The Lion and the Unicorn* pavilion. The interior for the pavilion had been designed by a practice run by two Royal College of Art (RCA) tutors, R.D. Russell and Robert Gooden, in collaboration with a third, Richard Guyatt, but as other RCA staff had become involved (Edward Bawden, for example, providing the *Country Life* mural) the College's Principal, Robin Darwin, had increasingly presented it as the RCA's own Festival contribution.<sup>396</sup> Two years later, the Coronation offered a further opportunity for Darwin to promote the College and, on this occasion, its explicitly royal status. Projects included the design of a damask

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<sup>394</sup> See, for example, Hennessy, *Having It So Good*, 244-45 and Conekin, "'Here is the Modern World Itself'", 246. The Conservatives had gained a narrow, thirteen seat majority at the election but were 2.7% behind Labour in the popular vote.

<sup>395</sup> Robert Hewison, *Culture and Consensus*, London: Methuen, 1995, 66.

<sup>396</sup> Seago, *Burning the Box*, 52.

used at Westminster Abbey and murals for Parliament Square.<sup>397</sup> When the College held its annual exhibition for 1953, at the Victoria and Albert Museum, it was badged as a ‘Coronation Year’ event and student work was complemented by a display that included the damask, a trinket box offered from the College to the Queen, as well as a selection of prints from a series published by the College, the *Coronation Lithographs*.<sup>398</sup>

As with the *AIA 1951 Lithographs*, there is scant archival material that relates to the origins and intentions of the new series. As noted in *Chapter Two*, some evidence points to the possibility that the idea was first circulated within the Artists International Association, potentially by Edwin La Dell, with the proposal being for a large-edition, low-price series. La Dell was certainly the organising force behind eventual publication at the RCA (where he now led a lithography section within the Engraving Department) just as he had been at the AIA two years earlier.<sup>399</sup> La Dell also contributed two designs of his own to the finished series, which in total comprised over thirty works by College staff, students and invited guests (Figures 40 and 41).<sup>400</sup> Several more of these artists had also participated in the AIA’s Festival series and thus, while the immediate institutional context for the *Coronation Series*

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<sup>397</sup> Royal College of Art Annual Report, 1952-53.

<sup>398</sup> *Royal College of Art Coronation Year Exhibition*, exhibition catalogue, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1953, unpaginated.

<sup>399</sup> See Royal College of Art Annual Report, 1952-53.

<sup>400</sup> For a full discussion of the composition of the series and a list of its contents see Appendix 6 and Michael Clegg, ‘The Royal College of Art’s *Coronation Lithographs*’, *Print Quarterly*, 36:4, December 2019, 462 – 65. Robin Darwin noted of the series that some were by ‘members of the staff, some by students, and others by distinguished outside artists’ (‘The Dodo and the Phoenix: the Royal College of Art since the War’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 102: 4918, February 1954, 174-188, 184).



was the Royal College itself, there were also links in organisation and personnel back to the AIA lithographic tradition and the *1951* series in particular.<sup>401</sup>

A launch exhibition for the *Coronation Lithographs* was held at the Redfern Gallery in May 1953, the month before the Coronation ceremony, and further displays of prints followed in London (including at Heal's modern furnishings store) and other British cities.<sup>402</sup> The AIA was involved, selling the prints through its Lisle Street gallery and again organising less conventional distribution via airport booksellers.<sup>403</sup> There were also overseas showings at venues in Europe, the US and the Antipodes.<sup>404</sup> For the RCA, the lithographs were thus, primarily, an extension of their other engagements with the Coronation, utilising the event to promote the College nationally and internationally via a prestige product. They were also something of a speculative financial venture and one that seems to have proved successful, Darwin remarking that 'Their publication was not only an aesthetic, but equally a financial feather in ... the college cap'.<sup>405</sup> Given the intention to make a financial return, it seems to have been the intention of the organisers that the pictures should be popular, at least with their purchasing public. However, there was no trace in their promotion or distribution of a

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<sup>401</sup> In addition to La Dell artists participating in both series were Cheese, Minton, Rosoman, Rothenstein, Sellars, Trevelyan, Uhlman and Vaughan, making a total of nine; at least four of the newcomers were also AIA members: Ayrton, Grant, Rowntree and Spender ('Two files recording membership fees, 1948 – 60', Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/11/3-4).

<sup>402</sup> The *Times*, 30<sup>th</sup> June 1953, 2.

<sup>403</sup> See the AIA's correspondence with the RCA bursar and WH Smiths, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/2/26/198, /206 and /216. Selected prints also seem to have been sold through department stores: a linoleum advert in *House and Garden*, March 1955, features Coronation prints sourced from Wolland Brothers.

<sup>404</sup> Darwin's introduction to the RCA Annual Report 1952-53 mentions displays in London and around the country and Commonwealth while La Dell's report lists showings in America, Canada, Switzerland, Germany Australia and New Zealand. Not all the stock was disposed of: in the College's Report for 1953-55, La Dell notes that the lithographs are still being sold, now under the name of 'Royal Lithographs'.

<sup>405</sup> Royal College of Art Annual Report, 1952-53; in the same Report, La Dell described the series as 'Profitable in many ways; even financially', a line repeated by Darwin ('The Dodo and the Phoenix', 184). Presumably the College bore the overheads, assisting the finances of the project.

rhetoric of democratising art ownership, though the price was relatively low. All prints in the series were sold in an edition of fifty at £2/12/6d, unmounted, a significant reduction on the price of the AIA's (slightly larger) *1951 Lithographs*.<sup>406</sup> A review of the Redfern Gallery exhibition stressed that 'prices are reasonable'.<sup>407</sup> Anthony Griffith's later assertion that the series enacted a decisive turn in how lithographs were thought about and marketed (away from a democratic conception and towards 'works of art directed to the elite') thus seems based on too narrow a view of the intended market.<sup>408</sup> The pricing and distribution suggest instead that the series was directed in large part at a broad section of middle-class buyers who would otherwise struggle to afford art.

There was, in fact, precedent for popular prints published to celebrate a royal event. At the Coronation of George V in 1911, for example, the Senefelder Club had partnered with the Daily Chronicle on lithographs that were printed in the newspaper and then issued as a portfolio.<sup>409</sup> Like similar ventures after 1911, however, the emphasis was on reportage, with images drawn on the spot during the Coronation using lithographic transfer paper.<sup>410</sup> The innovation of the *Coronation Lithographs* was to create a series that celebrated, rather than documented, the event. It thus combined something of these earlier

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<sup>406</sup> For price see *Paintings by Ceri Richards & Alphonse Quizet : Prints by Vlaminck : R.C.A. Coronation Lithographs*, exhibition catalogue, Redfern Gallery, 28<sup>th</sup> April – 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1953; for edition size see Griffiths, 'The Print Publications', 68 and Sidey, 'The Devenish Brothers', 376; the *Coronation Lithographs* were 19" x 24" (Griffiths, 'The Print Publications', 68) though both paper and images sizes varies somewhat around this.

<sup>407</sup> Donald Hamilton Fraser, 'Redfern Gallery', *Art News and Review*, 16<sup>th</sup> May 1953, 4.

<sup>408</sup> Griffiths, 'The Print Publications', 69.

<sup>409</sup> Garton, 'Early Lithography', Garton (ed.), *British Printmakers*, 194.

<sup>410</sup> Several contributors to the RCA series (including Bawden, La Dell, Mozley, Platt, Rosoman, Rowntree, Spender, Trevelyan and Uhlman) were also engaged by the Ministry of Works to produce paintings documenting Coronation day (though the paintings by La Dell, Mozley and Rowntree bear a relationship to their prints – prepared earlier – which suggests a limit to documentary observation (<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20150804143220/http://www.gac.culture.gov.uk/coronationpictures.html>), retrieved 4<sup>th</sup> June 2018).

precedents with the model of the *1951 Lithographs* and that series' unusual relation to a national, political event in the shape of the Festival.

The main body of this chapter looks at particular images from the *RCA Coronation Lithographs* in the context of how the Coronation was itself understood and discussed in 1953. Two years earlier, ahead of the Festival of Britain, its Director had declared to an American audience that 'Everybody knows that Britain is a land of lovely scenery and a famous past. We're a bit tired of the everlasting pictures of the British way of life showing Beefeaters at the Tower of London, Chelsea Pensioners and Cathedrals by moonlight'.<sup>411</sup> The prints from 1953 may appear on initial inspection to be a return to exactly this set of visual clichés. On cue, Fred Uhlman depicted the Tower of London fronted by Beefeaters, while Alistair Grant showed Hampton Court, Julian Trevelyan had the Mall and John Piper an unnamed *Royal Residence*, and peppered throughout were parading soldiers and royal boatmen. The overwhelming presence of such subjects raises an insistent question: how did an initiative with links back to 1951 and to the AIA adapt to an event that was cast in opposition to the Festival and that, for some of its champions such as Rowse, was an opportunity to reassert a less democratic, more hierarchical notion of artistic value and access? Developing an answer to this question links the varied interpretations of images contained in the chapter. Its first section examines a pair of prints that relate to popular art and popular festivity. Here I argue that the Festival's emphasis on the 'people' as the foundation of the country – as much as the sovereign – remained influential, despite the

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<sup>411</sup> Gerald Barry, letter to editor of *Flair*, Oct 1950, quoted in Atkinson, *The Festival of Britain*, 143.

Coronation's focus on monarchy. The sections that follow then interrogate the disparate use made of the ceremonial soldier in the iconography of several lithographs. While this subject undoubtedly mirrored an emphasis on imperial, military display, I suggest that individual pictures enacted but also troubled the Coronation's celebrations. These works also brought into consideration such varied issues as the legacy of pacifism among artists and the place of the soldier in London's queer sub-culture.

Across the chapter, it is thus suggested that the series did, in general terms, successfully inhabit and express the mood of 1953 but in ways that were not necessarily incongruent with earlier affiliations to Festival narratives.<sup>412</sup> Moreover, particular prints exhibited other, more specific points of tension with the Coronation's national display. Such a verdict complicates the story of a decisive turn in the dominant cultural mood at the start of the 1950s that I have outlined above. There was continuity with the immediate post-war years as well as change, though above all there was complexity melded into this single moment. In making this argument, my study of visual art complements and develops the work on the literary culture of 'New Elizabethanism' collected by Irene Morra and Rob Gossedge.<sup>413</sup> Morra notes that the optimism surrounding the Coronation masked deep differences between those for whom the event anticipated a decisive break from Labour's social reforms and those whose enthusiasm was inspired by them, but also that, nonetheless, a national optimism encompassed both. On this understanding, 'New Elizabethan' discourse was not merely reactionary window-dressing but rather 'a serious

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<sup>412</sup> It is notable that there was substantial continuity among planners and visual designers from Festival to Coronation: Hugh Casson and Misha Black were prominent in both (Atkinson, *The Festival*, 199).

<sup>413</sup> Morra and Gossedge, *The New Elizabethan Age*.

attempt to reconcile the distinct social and ideological instincts' that had been revealed in the polarised electorate of 1951 'into an enduring construction of contemporary British identity and immediate potential'.<sup>414</sup>

In concluding the chapter, I consider the *Coronation Lithographs* as a product of the particular institutional culture prevailing at the RCA in the period, in particular as it has been described by Alex Seago.<sup>415</sup> In as much as Seago's account portrays the RCA as focussed on vernacular art traditions and visual expressions of a British (or more specifically, English) national identity, there is a connection to Anne Massey's dismissive characterisation of 'welfare state culture' as previously discussed in relation to the *AIA 1951 Lithographs*. Indeed, the situation at the RCA might be seen as a specific example of Massey's broader concept. Again, however, I shall propose that the interpretive possibilities of the prints produced within this culture show that it had a potential for richness and complexity that is missed if it is seen as merely parochial or outmoded, as Seago on occasion suggests. I also continue the argument begun at the end of the last chapter by suggesting that a revised, more sympathetic concept of welfare state culture can, by contrast, help draw attention to these possibilities, while the interpretations discussed here illustrate how this culture itself developed after the return of a Conservative government.

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<sup>414</sup> Morra and Gossedge, 'Introduction', 4.

<sup>415</sup> Seago, *Burning the Box*, in particular Chapter 3: 'English Good Taste'.

**‘A golden coach through old London town’: Ideas of Popular Art and Popular Celebration in the RCA Coronation Lithographs**

Faced with the need to complete a lithograph ahead of the Coronation itself, one option for artists was to portray the preparations. Kenneth Rowntree took this approach with *Country Celebrations*, depicting an outsize model of the royal monogram being unloaded – with difficulty – from the back of a truck parked near a parish church (Figure 42). Barbara Jones used the same tactic in *Coronation Coach* but in relation to the main procession, showing the Gold State Coach (used to transport the monarch to Westminster Abbey for the Coronation ceremony) being cleaned and buffed in the Royal Mews (Figure 43). The coach, which is seen from a low angle, dominates the picture, with the buildings of Mews used to define a stage on which its large and elaborate yellow-gold form is posed.

Jones was among those participating in the series as a guest and her inclusion suggests the breadth of address to the public that was sought. In 1953, she was a figure with a significant but distinctive profile within the visual arts, working at the intersection of public and commercial art rather than producing easel paintings for the market. Jones had initially trained at the RCA in the 1930s as a mural painter, then, during the war, she participated in the ‘Recording Britain’ project and, in its aftermath, gained commissions for both murals and exhibition design.<sup>416</sup> She also made a substantive contribution to the

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<sup>416</sup> Working for the Council of Industrial Design, Jones was involved in the *Britain Can Make It* exhibition (1946) and produced panels for the traveling exhibition *Design Fair* (1948); amongst other private commissions she provided pictures for the P&O liner S.S. *Orcades* in 1948-49, the start of a longer association with the company. See ‘Barbara Jones’, University of Brighton Design Archives, <http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/collections/design-archives/resources/women-designers/barbara-jones>, accessed 28<sup>th</sup> August 2020. Also see (in the V&A collection) Edward Bawden, ‘Information Card for RMS *Orcades*’, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O597495/information-card-for-rms-orcades-information-card-bawden->

Festival of Britain, on the South Bank but also, in particular, as co-organiser, with Tom Ingram, of the *Black Eyes & Lemonade* exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery.<sup>417</sup> The latter was badged as ‘A Festival of Britain Exhibition by Arrangement with the Arts Council’ and subtitled ‘British Popular Art’ and developed the interest in folk art and eccentricity found in *The Lion and the Unicorn* pavilion but with the addition of mass manufactured products and a less overt didactic narrative of national character.<sup>418</sup> To coincide with the exhibition, Jones produced her own book on the same topic, *The Unsophisticated Arts*, which brought together a number of pieces previously published in the *Architectural Review*.<sup>419</sup> Alongside her career as artist and designer, Jones was thus established as a leading authority on British popular art, a combination later symbolised by her Fellowships with both the Society of Industrial Artists and the Royal Anthropological Institute.<sup>420</sup>

Though Jones was an experienced lithographer in relation to book jacket design and illustration, prior to 1953 she had produced only one other lithographic wall-print, *Fairground*, issued as part of the first series of School Prints in 1946 (Figure 44). While published five years before *The Unsophisticated Arts*, *Fairground* demonstrates the shared interests between Jones’ art and her anthropological research and writing. The book opens

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[edward/](#), accessed 28<sup>th</sup> August 2020; a number of other artists involved in the 1951 and 1953 lithograph series were employed on *Orcades*: Bawden, Lamb, Minton, Scarfe, Rowntree, and Humphrey Spender.

<sup>417</sup> Catherine Moriarty, ‘Drawing, writing and curating: Barbara Jones and the art of arrangement’, exhibition essay for *Black Eyes and Lemonade: Curating Popular Art*, Whitechapel Gallery, March-September 2013, unpaginated. On the South Bank Jones designed and produced the ‘Coastline of Britain’ mural for the Seaside Pavilion, the Outside Broadcasting mural, and the figures of the Lion and Unicorn for the eponymous pavilion, whilst she also contributed to the decorations for the Battersea Pleasure Garden (Barbara Jones, ‘Popular Arts’, Banham and Hillier (eds), *Tonic*, 129-32).

<sup>418</sup> For the titling see the exhibition poster reproduced in Moriarty, ‘Drawing, writing and curating’.

<sup>419</sup> Barbara Jones, *The Unsophisticated Arts*, London: Architectural Press, 1951.

<sup>420</sup> ‘Barbara Jones’, University of Brighton Design Archives.

with a discussion of fairground rides and a detailed description of the decoration of roundabouts in precisely the terms shown in the earlier lithograph. Moreover, the accompanying colour plate shows an organ and a group of carved animals and fantastical birds (for riding) very much like those at the focal point of the School Prints lithograph. The text of *The Unsophisticated Arts* also makes clear the extent to which both its plate and *Fairground* are nostalgic images. Such rides and carving are described as having been largely displaced by electric power and an aesthetic based on smooth chrome rather than spiral columns. Jones imagines taking her reader to a modern fairground and acknowledges that neither are quite at home: ‘the mind seems a little surprised at this contemporary equipment, replaces it with something fifty years out of date, and looks with wonder at the sparks flying from the Dodgems’.<sup>421</sup>

While the Gold State Coach at the centre of Jones’ 1953 print may seem a very different kind of object to the fairground ride, I would suggest that her approach to its depiction also, in fact, draws it into the domain of popular art. Jones’ conception of this category was broad. In *The Unsophisticated Arts* she defined popular art (or ‘unsophisticated art’, the two terms are used synonymously) as encompassing both the handcrafted (or ‘folk’) and objects that are machine-made but in accordance with popular taste (‘vernacular’).<sup>422</sup> She also referenced a variety of types of object, from tattoos and working canal boats to seaside hotels and the decorated weekend houseboats of

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<sup>421</sup> Jones, *The Unsophisticated Arts*, 44

<sup>422</sup> Jones is less clear on whether she considers contemporary manufactured objects as popular art: they appear to meet her definition, but she also describes 1914 as a ‘tombstone date’ for industrial manufactures (ibid., 9) and stresses traditions of decorative novelty and elaboration seen as threatened by new, streamlined products.



‘comfortable men and women’.<sup>423</sup> For Jones popular art was thus not reducible to specified modes of making or to productions by or for a certain class, rather the common factor was seen to be (rather more subjectively) variety and ‘liveliness’ in design and its characteristic form was ‘a nice rich debased baroque’ which, it was claimed, had been dominant through to the second quarter of the twentieth century.<sup>424</sup>

As an object, the Gold Stage Coach was thus amenable to being seen by Jones as an example of popular art, given that its own decoration shared something of this ‘rich debased baroque’. The coach had been conceived by the architect William Chambers for George III and first used in 1762. From the start, there was criticism of its extravagance both in cost and design and its sculptural features were seen as whimsical rather than rooted in a symbolic tradition. The large Tritons (or sea gods) over the wheels appeared odd in the context of a land carriage, while the palm trees at each corner seemed to signify nothing more than Chambers’ predilection for oriental subjects.<sup>425</sup> In Jones’ rendering of the coach, both these gods and palms were prominent features; one of the Triton’s gazing back at the viewer with quizzical eyes. Moreover, the gilding of the coach, that gave it its name and had been restored for the Coronation in 1953, allowed Jones to fill the centre of the print with a strong, rich yellow. This was a colour which had featured prominently in *Black Eyes & Lemonade* (and the publicity which Jones produced for it) as a marker of the vivacity of popular taste.<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>425</sup> Frost, *Coronation*, 58.

<sup>426</sup> For Jones and yellow see Nead, *The Tiger in the Smoke*, 222; see also the exhibition poster reproduced in Moriarty, ‘Drawing, writing and curating’.

The Gold State Coach thus shared in elements of a popular aesthetic, as least as Jones conceived it. However, there was also another route to connect its obvious grandeur with the world of ‘unsophisticated’ taste: through its appearance in popular reproductions. For the Coronation, Jones reprised aspects of *Black Eyes & Lemonade* by organising a further exhibition, *Royal Occasions: An Exhibition of the Popular Arts, Jubilees, Coronations, Progresses and Nuptials*, that comprised objects from the previous 200 years, most commercial products. The show was held at the Tea Centre in Regents Street from May to June, and followed (somewhat pointedly) an exhibition at the same location of officially approved souvenirs for 1953. According to the ‘Foreword’ to the small catalogue, the objects showed the ‘homely loyalties and enthusiasms aroused by public rejoicings’ but could also be irreverent: ‘A royal occasion should be a time to laugh as well as to cheer’.<sup>427</sup> Several came from Jones’ own collection, including a model of the Gold State Coach that had been produced as a souvenir of George VI’s Coronation in 1937. Jones illustrated this model in a heavily inked drawing above the catalogue ‘Foreword’. A potential link between this image and *Coronation Coach* was emphasised by the shared presence of a watching cat (though without the second, playful animal shown in the lithograph). Although in the former case the cat drew attention to the diminutive scale of the model and in the latter to the imposing size of the coach, in both cases it also served to domesticate the grandeur of a state carriage. Moreover, the presence of a watching feline to connect the two images emphasised how the full-sized coach, represented in the lithograph, was an object already

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<sup>427</sup> *Royal Occasions: An Exhibition of the Popular Arts, Jubilees, Coronations, Progresses and Nuptials*, exhibition catalogue, The Tea Council, London, May – June 1953, 3. The Foreword was by D.M. Forrest of the Tea Council.

appropriated by popular culture through souvenir reproductions such as Jones' model, a point also invoked by the lithograph's doll-like attendant figures.

In discussing the place of *Black Eyes & Lemonade* at the Festival of Britain, Lynda Nead has noted how it appeared to fit naturally with the Festival's celebration of national whimsy (alongside the displays in *The Lion and the Unicorn* pavilion' for example) and yet also constituted something of an anti-Festival. By championing the fantastic, florid and historical, the exhibition set its face against the South Bank's planned, streamlined, Scandinavian modernism (an opposition that crystallised in Jones' inclusion of objects from a tattoo parlour demolished to make way for the Festival site).<sup>428</sup> While *Black Eyes & Lemonade* might thus be understood as a kind of internal opposition to the Festival's most salient aesthetic values and their wider cultural implications, its inclusion within the Festival programme also emphasises the breadth and complexity of ideas that the Festival managed to encompass. If we move on two years to the Coronation then *Coronation Coach* shows, in the interpretation developed above, that there was a continuity of interest in Jones' approach to the two events. This in turn suggests that varied perspectives on the Coronation were utilised by contemporaries, ways of celebrating the event as something other than a simple negation of all the Festival had sought to symbolise. If *Black Eyes & Lemonade* broadened the aesthetic of the Festival by taking seriously its focus on 'the people' and celebrating forms of popular art that rubbed against a modernising vision, then *Coronation Coach* similarly challenged assertions of the Coronation as re-establishing

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<sup>428</sup> Nead, *The Tiger in the Smoke*, 226.

cultural hierarchies by viewing one of its grandest objects through the eye of ‘unsophisticated’ taste.

Other cultural products from the Coronation year show the Gold State Coach as particularly amenable, among the props of Royal pageantry, to appropriation by popular art forms. In 1957, Richard Hoggart characterised working class interest in the monarchy as ‘personalist’, ‘if they are interested, the interest is for what can be translated into the personal’.<sup>429</sup> Within the Coronation procession, it was the Gold State Coach which announced the arrival of the Queen in person and acted as, in effect, a visual extension of her otherwise largely invisible person.<sup>430</sup> In the faux-cockney lyrics of Noel Gay’s ‘In a Golden Coach’, the most successful of several popular songs written for the occasion, the coach is thus utilised as a metonym for the body of the Queen, who is reimagined as the people’s sweetheart:

In a golden coach  
 There’s a heart of gold  
 Riding through old London town.  
 With the sweetest Queen  
 The world’s ever seen  
 Wearing her golden crown.

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<sup>429</sup> Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1960 (first published, 1958), 86.

<sup>430</sup> In paintings of the procession in the Government Art Collection by L.S. Lowry and Richard Eurich, the coach has just this function, providing a dash of brilliance around an otherwise near – or completely – obscured monarch; in Charles Mozley’s BEA poster, discussed below, it invoked the Queen’s presence whilst avoiding potential charges of *lèse-majesté* in involving the monarch in advertising. In the *Coronation Lithographs* the Queen herself is an entirely absent figure, perhaps due to their preparation in advance of the procession or perhaps because of a similar concern to avoid *lèse-majesté*.

As she drives in state  
 Through the palace gate  
 Her beauty the whole world will see.  
 In a golden coach  
 There's a heart of gold  
 That belongs to you and me.<sup>431</sup>

This might suggest that *Coronation Coach* was a further example of Kingsley Martin's 'royal propaganda', like Gay's lyric eliding the difference between monarch and commoner by reimagining the Coronation's display of pomp and power through the forms of popular art. However, this is to miss the extent to which Jones is representing royal populism to a knowing audience rather than participating in it, much as her image of the Gold State Coach signifies its reproduction in popular culture as much as the object itself.

Given its pricing and distribution, it is reasonable to assume that Jones' imagined audience for the print was the same as that for her book, *The Unsophisticated Arts*. That is, both book and print are aimed not at the primary consumer of the popular arts, but rather at the middle-class connoisseur or the amateur ethnographer; someone who Jones can take to an imaginary fair and surprise with the ousting of steam-powered wooden horses by sparking dodgems, but who would appreciate a copy of her *Fairground* School Print. In this context, *Coronation Coach* invoked the popular cultural response to the Coronation rather than being a direct part of it. Such a distancing does not mean that the print occupied a

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<sup>431</sup> Quoted in Philip Ziegler, *Crown and People*, London: Collins, 1978, 104 and discussed in Mort, *Capital Affairs*, 37-38.

critical political position (its large central motif of the Gold State Coach marks it as a straightforwardly patriotic and royalist image) but it does support, even suggest, a degree of ironic detachment – a perspective cued for the viewer by the watching cats. Thus, for example, the presence of the two coachmen burnishing the gilt has the potentially subversive effect of making visible the usually hidden work which lay behind the Coronation's glamour. Any hard, political edge to this revelation is ameliorated by the cheerful willingness on their part – in their slightly comic, formal dress – but that it is two male staff labouring to clean what, on this occasion, will be the Queen's coach is, perhaps, an added satirical twist.<sup>432</sup>

If Barbara Jones' *'Black Eyes & Lemonade* had been a curated presentation of popular art within the Festival of Britain, a less orderly eruption of folk culture came with the impromptu arrival at the South Bank of a delegation of Pearly Kings and Queens.<sup>433</sup> Pearly themselves were one facet of a wider sub-culture, that of the costermongers (or mobile street sellers) whose origins were medieval but who had a particular association with Victorian London. Costers distinctive dress and speech had made them a common subject of popular songs and music hall sketches and from the eighteenth century they also featured in cheaply produced etchings.<sup>434</sup> The costers' reputation for self-organisation and for resisting

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<sup>432</sup> For the (largely female) labour behind the Coronation, and its absence in contemporary and subsequent representation, see Clark, 'Queen for a Day', 2015.

<sup>433</sup> The event is described by Antony Hippisley Coxe in 'I enjoyed it more than anything in my life', Banham and Hillier (eds), *Tonic*, 88-90.

<sup>434</sup> For the representation of costers in the music hall see Ian Peddie, 'Playing at Poverty: The Music Hall and the Staging of the Working Class', Aruna Krishnamurthy, (ed.), *The Working-Class Intellectual in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009, 235-254.

attempts to regulate their trade (and latterly for semi-permanent warfare with the police) made such representations a symbolic outlet for wider chafing at civic authority.<sup>435</sup> By the post-war period, however, the coster was increasingly a figure of nostalgic interest, including from patrician figures. During the Arts Council's planning for the Festival of Britain, Sir Owen Morshead suggested commissioning portraits of British types, with a Pearly King among them, while the Festival's unexpected Pearly visitors were unproblematically co-opted into its programme, a special Festival King and Queen being appointed for the duration.<sup>436</sup>

At a more general level, the Festival's presentations and its 'live architecture' display in the East End borough of Poplar contributed to a subtle transformation in the received idea of the cockney, away from connotations of criminality and ill-discipline towards being exemplars of the ordinary Briton's patriotism, Blitz spirit and democratic instinct, and though costers were not a strictly East End phenomenon they can be seen as a part of this change.<sup>437</sup> However, in the *1951 Lithographs*, published alongside the Festival and explored in the preceding chapter, neither cockney, coster, nor other London theme was prominent; by contrast, in the *Coronation Lithographs* two years later, London and Londoners were a major feature with two images taking costers as their specific subject.<sup>438</sup> In one of these, *Costers* by Richard Platt, three cheerful figures in clothes decorated with

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<sup>435</sup> Kellow Chesney, *The Victorian Underworld*, Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1972, 43-56.

<sup>436</sup> Morshead was Assistant Keeper of the Royal Archives; the quotation is taken from Massey, *The Independent Group*, 13.

<sup>437</sup> Conekin, *The Autobiography*, 120 (Conekin attributes this argument to Gareth Steadman Jones).

<sup>438</sup> Only one of the *Coronation Lithographs* has a setting explicitly outside London, Leonard Rosoman's 'Two Pipers in the Sunlight'.

pearl-buttons take a horse-drawn cart past a crimson tent (Figure 45).<sup>439</sup> In the second, Ceri Richards' *East End Celebration: Costers Dancing*, a flamboyantly dressed woman and her male partner dance spiritedly beside an organ grinder in a loosely delineated street scene (Figure 46).<sup>440</sup> For Richards, this subject matter continued a theme within his existing graphic work. His first experiment in printmaking had been three linocuts made in 1939, comprising stylised portraits of a costerwoman and a one-eyed costerman.<sup>441</sup> His first lithograph, in 1940, again used the coster motif, while between 1951 and 1952 he created four versions of *Costers Dancing* at the RCA, though only one, the *Coronation* print, was fully editioned.<sup>442</sup> By introducing dance into these works of the early 1950s, Richards also combined the coster theme with another personal interest, capturing musical experience in visual art.<sup>443</sup>

*East End Celebration: Costers Dancing* was, in many ways, an image of straightforward gaiety. Richards' apparently improvisatory printmaking technique conveyed a lively, swirling sense of movement. The dancers' impossibly twisted arms were placed at the centre of the picture, complemented by the woman's raised skirts and gravity-defying hat, while, the organ's turning-handle offered a subtle cue to the interchangeability of music

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<sup>439</sup> Platt was one of the RCA students in the series. His work had previously been selected by La Dell for the Arts Council's *Contemporary British Lithographs* exhibition in 1951. He appears to be the artist identified as Russell Platt in Buckman, *Artists in Britain*, 1274.

<sup>440</sup> Richards had studied at the RCA from 1924 to 1947. In 1953 he was teaching at Chelsea Polytechnic and would join the staff of the Slade in 1955 and the RCA in 1958 (Buckman, *Artists in Britain*, 1340).

<sup>441</sup> Roberto Sanesi, *The graphic works of Ceri Richards*, Milano: Cerastico Editore, 1973, 21, 23 and 25. See also Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 103-05 and Figures 83 and 84; Carey and Griffiths suggest that Richard's used linocut to mimic the bold black and white linearity of cheap popular woodcuts matching a seemingly crude, but punchy folk form to the makeshift vitality of the costers' appearance.

<sup>442</sup> This has been the source of confusion in the relevant literature, see Appendix 6 for a full discussion.

<sup>443</sup> This informed significant later works, notably the *Hammerklavier Suite* of lithographs (1959) and the painting cycle *La Cathedrale Engloutie* (1957).



and kinetic energy.<sup>444</sup> The whole scene could thus be understood as a popular equivalent to the more staid spectacle of the Coronation procession. This equivalence was underscored by the female dancer, whose prominence matched that of the new Queen in official events, and the emphatically London costumes and setting, which matched the London-centric nature of the principal events. Given such parallels, the image could have been understood as at odds with the resurgent cultural conservatism articulated by a figure such as A. L. Rowse: the picture, after all, retained a focus on ordinary Londoners as the authentic embodiment of the nation and on the London of street parties rather than that of imperial grandeur. However, the image was also ambiguous, opening other potential lines of interpretation. The element of ‘cockney saturnalia’ that Mel Gooding perceives in the work could alternatively have been received as a celebration of new freedoms and licence after Labour’s years of bureaucracy and restraint.<sup>445</sup> The coster, after all, was less a typical post-war Londoner than a symbol from a culture largely past, a culture of flamboyant individualism built around its own hierarchies of (pearly) royalty.

Given Richard’s own, pre-existing aesthetic interests in coster imagery and the fact that he had been working on iterations of this picture since 1951, it seems likely that he simply adapted an existing work to the context of the RCA lithograph series by adding a prefix to his title: *East End Celebration*. Nonetheless, the print was an effective aesthetic affirmation of a mood of national celebration. Its vivacity was partly borrowed from its

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<sup>444</sup> See Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 223, for a description of Richards’ extempore approach to the technical aspects of lithography.

<sup>445</sup> Quoted from Mel Gooding, ‘Introduction’, *Ceri Richards Graphics*, exhibition Catalogue, National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, 1979, 4.

subject but also enhanced by Richard's bold lithographic technique, and it was well matched to the popular associations of the form. The exact meaning of that vivacity in relation to contemporary discourses circulating around the Coronation was though, as I have suggested, harder to pin down. If it was an overt repudiation of attempts to restore traditional cultural hierarchies, it also spoke to ideas of reclaimed folk freedoms after the Labour years. Barbara Jones' *Coronation Coach* was more direct in its portrayal of an object involved in the Coronation procession. By focussing on the Gold State Coach through the lens of popular art traditions, however, Jones was able to make an image which both revelled in the visual excess of Coronation gilt while also maintaining a degree of knowing detachment, a detachment which was suited to the prints' audience and her own history as artist, curator and commentator.<sup>446</sup> Like Richard's contribution to the RCA series, her lithograph was a positive response to the Coronation, but its seriousness lay precisely in not giving way to an uncritical cult of monarchy, its light touches of ironic humour licensed by prints' historical association with satire.

### ***Horse Guards Parade: Soldiers and Spectacle***

In comparison with the diversity of the Festival of Britain series, the *RCA Coronation Lithographs* comprised a restricted range of subjects.<sup>447</sup> Several artists treated royal palaces or objects, or the accoutrements of Coronation ceremonial such as Jones' Gold State Coach;

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<sup>446</sup> Nead, *The Tiger in the Smoke*, 228-31, suggests that Jones' interest in the popular arts – and in particular her broad concern for the manufactured as well as the hand-made – adumbrated developments in British cultural and aesthetic thinking later in the decade, including the embrace of (American) popular culture by artists and critics associated with the ICA and the Independent Group and the theorisation of this approach as a questioning of inherited aesthetic hierarchies.

<sup>447</sup> I have found no evidence of a written rubric for contributors to the *Coronation Lithographs*, though it may be that centralised production through the RCA meant artists worked within a clear, but informal, prescription.

others focussed on popular celebrations or holidays, including Richards, Platt and Rowntree. Markedly the most prominent single subject in the series, however, was the ceremonial soldier.

Preparing their work ahead of Coronation day, artists could be confident that military display would be at the centre of the spectacle. Pictures of soldiers and military bandsmen thus offered a way to connect pre-emptive designs with the look and the experience of the occasion itself with its multi-sensory combination of colour, music and choreographed movement.<sup>448</sup> Edwin La Dell's two prints for the series, for example, both featured marching Guardsmen: *Horse Guards Parade* and *Bandsmen in the City* (Figures 40 and 41). The second, in particular, evoked something of the vibrancy of the occasion; the representation of soldier-musicians making an appeal to the auditory through their rhythmic steps, with their bearskins patterned like notes on a stave, while the colour contrast of crimson jackets with yellow-green background added to the visual dynamism. Several other lithographs in the series (such as Bernard Cheese's *Drum Major* and Michael Ayrton's *Kettle Drum*) similarly combined soldiers, rhythmic music and parade. In *Bandsmen in the City*, La Dell placed the familiar, popular subject of military musicians in front of a view of St Paul's Cathedral, the soldiers thus giving a Coronation overlay to a well-known London scene.<sup>449</sup> A similar approach was used in La Dell's other print for the series, *Horse Guards Parade*, and also by Julian Trevelyan in *The Mall*, where soldiers (and a glimpse of the Gold State Coach)

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<sup>448</sup> The military also took part in Coronation day parades away from the main processional route; see, for example, the photograph of the Coldstream Guards marching through London outskirts in Frost, *Coronation*, 133

<sup>449</sup> By bringing together the military and the cathedral, the picture potentially referenced St Paul's as a symbol of national survival in the face of the Blitz.

give Coronation relevance to a skyline of London landmarks set behind the Victoria Monument (Figure 47). In both these images, the soldiers are little more than coloured shapes in a wide field; their easy comprehensibility from such attenuated cues making them ideal for the broad, painterly application of lithographic media preferred by the two artists.

The spectacle of military pageantry had been central to the repositioning of the monarchy as ‘splendid, public and popular’ which had been initiated, primarily, by Benjamin Disraeli and consolidated across the last third of the nineteenth century.<sup>450</sup> For the Coronation in 1953, although the rites in Westminster Abbey stressed their mediaeval lineage, the procession to and from the Abbey was fully in the late nineteenth century tradition, taking its cue from Victoria’s Diamond jubilee in 1897 as well as earlier twentieth-century Coronations. The emphasis was on flamboyant military display and international prestige, with the procession ‘centred overwhelmingly on the military, the Empire and Commonwealth’; the whole, in Wendy Webster’s phrase, enacting a ‘mass national commodity spectacle’.<sup>451</sup> According to one estimate 26,700 British servicemen took part.<sup>452</sup> As discussed above, the use of London’s architecture as the backdrop for this royal-cum-military display also revived the notion of London as a synecdoche for the nation – as a counterpoint to the Festival of Britain’s regionalism – and allowed a reassertion of the idea

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<sup>450</sup> David Cannadine, ‘The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: the British Monarchy and the “Invention of Tradition”, c.1820-1977’, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, 120.

<sup>451</sup> Helen Phillips, ‘Young Elizabethans, Young Readers’, 195; Webster, *Englishness and Empire*, 6. The military presence did not, make the procession a straightforward display of power: there was, for example, no display of contemporary hardware. It is also worth noting that the symbolism of the military in Britain was not necessarily conservative; from the later nineteenth century the army had been promoted by some radicals as an exemplar of an effective state institution and rational governance (see Glen Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War in Edwardian Newspapers, 1899 – 1914*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, 20).

<sup>452</sup> See <https://www.royal.uk/50-facts-about-queens-coronation-0>, accessed 20<sup>th</sup> June 2018.

of the capital as ‘a city centred by the monarchy, and by the political and cultural associations of the Crown’.<sup>453</sup> Such an insistent emphasis on the military within Coronation display did not, however, pass unchallenged by those who felt excluded from the vision of the nation being projected. As preparations for the Coronation got underway, a group of cultural figures that included Benjamin Britten and Sybil Thorndike (both associated with pre-war pacifism) wrote to the *Times* to promote a complementary civilian focus for events: ‘but as the Sovereign represents all the people of this nation, and all their strivings and aspirations, it is equally right, we suggest, that a pacific show should be presented to the world as well as a military one’; they concluded that a more inclusive spirit was needed to embody ‘a modern conception of democratic sovereignty’.<sup>454</sup>

An emphasis on the visual spectacle of ‘the Queen and her soldiers’, as found in the RCA lithographs, could thus reflect and reinforce one available interpretation of the Coronation: as a return to an idea of Britain as a lion without a unicorn, an imperial and adventurous nation resting on military values of tradition and hierarchy inherited from the nineteenth century, not the domestic egalitarianism and overseas retreat ascribed to the Attlee government.<sup>455</sup> Images such as La Dell’s *Horse Guards Parade* and Trevelyan’s *The Mall*, where little more than touches of ink were sufficient to mobilise the viewer’s expectation of London as the site of parading royal regiments, could thus be understood as participants in a revanchist conservative vision of both capital and country, and a similar

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<sup>453</sup> Mort, *Capital Affairs*, 40. Soldiers within a recognisable London settings were a key feature of the art works commissioned or purchased by the Ministry of Works.

<sup>454</sup> The *Times*, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1952, 4. The letter is cited in Wiebe, “‘Now and England’”, 156.

<sup>455</sup> Quotation from Shils and Michael Young, ‘The Meaning of the Coronation’, 75.

claim could be made about the plethora of other soldier pictures in the *Coronation Lithographs*. This possibility, however, gives a sharper edge to the question posed earlier in the chapter: how do such images and interpretative possibilities fit within an artistic venture whose immediate antecedent was linked to the Festival of Britain and whose origins can be traced back to the politically committed, democratising promotion of lithography by the anti-war AIA, of which La Dell and Trevelyan remained members?<sup>456</sup>

In considering Jones' *Coronation Coach*, I argued that the treatment of a subject overtly related to the Coronation procession could be celebratory while also retaining a degree of distance, even irony, and maintaining links to a Festival narrative that placed the 'people' as central to British nationhood. In the remainder of this and in the following section, I look further at some of those prints from the RCA series which featured ceremonial soldiers and again I suggest that, while they undoubtedly added to the military emphasis bemoaned by the signatories to the *Times* letter, they also allowed interpretations – both of themselves and of the Coronation itself – that were more complex than simply manifesting conservative or imperial revivalism. Though these soldier images were anything but oppositional to the mood of the official Coronation celebrations, there were, nonetheless, continuities with the lithograph series' heritage, including the AIA's 1951 series.

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<sup>456</sup> The AIA's new objectives, adopted in 1953, included 'the promotion of Peace and international understanding' (Morris and Radford, *The AIA*, 91). Other subjects were certainly available to artists; in Jones' *Royal Occasions: An Exhibition of the Popular Arts, Jubilees, Coronations, Progresses and Nuptials* exhibition at the Tea Council, described above, soldier imagery barely featured.

The earlier series had itself, in fact, contained an image that centred on soldierly spectacle at a London landmark, Stella Marsden's *Horseguards* (Figure 48), and in the context of considering the Coronation works this too merits further attention. Marsden had won a place in the 1951 *Lithographs* through the open competition, rather than being invited to participate.<sup>457</sup> Nonetheless, *Horseguards* was selected for inclusion in the large School Prints edition and proved to be the most commercially successful of these prints by some margin, an indicator of the popularity of the theme and its perceived suitability for children.<sup>458</sup> As with La Dell's *Bandsmen in the City*, Marsden's image used figures to animate the view of an architectural landmark. In this case, however, the figures were divided into two distinct, though intermingled, groups. The civilian sightseers, largely to the left and with a slight preponderance of women, were represented solely in tones of grey and might at first have seemed somewhat ghostly presences. Yet they were firmly modelled and the relationships between them hinted at lives beyond the depicted moment. As characters in whom the viewer might recognise him or herself – there is a family group and two couples, one caught in a moment of intimacy – these figures could act as unobtrusive cues, inviting the viewer to join them as an observer of the scene and of the second group of individuals. This second group comprised the Life Guards, mounted, standing solo and on parade. Their

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<sup>457</sup> Marsden was consolidating her place as a professional artist at this time, having studied at the RCA from 1938 to 1946. She held a joint exhibition with La Dell at the AIA Galleries in January 1949 and in March of that year she took part in the AIA's *Artists Under Thirty* show where her lithography was picked out by the *Manchester Guardian* and described as promising by Eric Newton in the *Sunday Times* (see *AIA Press Book 1948 – 60*, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/16/1). In her later career she had a solo show of paintings at the Grovesnor Galleries (20<sup>th</sup> May – 4<sup>th</sup> June 1965) and became a senior lecturer at St Martin's School of Art ('Marsden', Telegraph announcements, 2010 <http://announcements.telegraph.co.uk/deaths/110123/marsden>, accessed 4<sup>th</sup> July 2018; Buckman, *Artists in Britain*, 1063).

<sup>458</sup> The School Prints edition of 'Horseguards' had sold 459 copies by June 1952 and sold out the edition of 1,000 by July 1957; Marsden served for a time as Treasurer of the AIA prints committee (see *Chapter Two* and Appendix 5).

bright, flat scarlet uniforms were distinct from the muted colours used elsewhere and patterned the surface of the print. Three of these soldiers were placed in the foreground: an opposed pair of horsemen, in profile, and a dismounted soldier centred between them, but who faces the viewer obliquely. The combination of distinctive colour and stiff, formalised pose of this central trio served to make them an oddly unreal feature within the carefully depicted architectural space. Their overall effect suggested the kind of illustrations of regimental uniforms that were a common feature of interwar cigarette cards or the work of late-Victorian and Edwardian military postcard artists such as Harry Payne, in which posed figures were shown against a token background.<sup>459</sup> Advertisements for cast toy soldiers, popular from the later nineteenth century, were another potential point of visual reference (and one encouraged by the association of lithographs and art for children, instantiated in 1951 through the School Prints edition).<sup>460</sup> The civilians in Marsden's image thus emerged to take on the role of fellow spectators, but the objects of shared gaze were placed at a further remove: rather than soldiers, the viewer could recognise conventional representations of soldiers, and representations of a kind that were somewhat nostalgically connected to the popular art of an earlier era or of childhood play.

On the one hand, Marsden's print placed military display at its front and centre and showed this as integrated into the wider culture, as a spectacle enjoyed by couples and families at its own dedicated London locations. On the other, her image could be seen as

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<sup>459</sup> See Michael Cane and R G Harris, *For Queen and Country: the career of Harry Payne, military artist, 1858-1927*, Kingston, Surrey: Michael Cane, 1977.

<sup>460</sup> For examples of toy soldier advertising see The Brighton Toy and Model Museum, [http://www.brightontoymuseum.co.uk/index/Category:Britains\\_Ltd](http://www.brightontoymuseum.co.uk/index/Category:Britains_Ltd), accessed 21<sup>st</sup> June 2018.



less about soldiery than popular soldier imagery. From this perspective, and given its Festival context, its emphasis fell on British whimsy, depicting an army that parades with antique weapons (swords are prominent in the picture) while also invoking the nation's enthusiasm for hobbies such as cigarette card collecting. Family and children are also emphasised, again as in the Festival narrative, both through the spectating family group and an imagining of the Horseguards in terms of toys. While aspects of the scene connected with historical realities of British military adventurism (the Life Guards' uniform, deriving in large part from the early nineteenth century, evoked an age of imperial expansion), these other connections between the military and hobbies or childhood put an emphasis on soldierly functions of flamboyant entertainment for a domestic audience rather than others, such as active service and overseas deployment.<sup>461</sup>

Within the 1951 series, Marsden's print thus showed how ceremonial military imagery might be used in ways that avoided a straightforward celebration of power or imperial reach. In 1953, the more strident manifestations of New Elizabethanism put emphasis on just these qualities, but other meanings for the image of the soldier on parade also came to the fore. In particular the soldier was utilized as a symbol of tourism rather than militarism, of the pleasures of being a tourist and the economic potential of tourism. Gordon Nicholl's artwork for the British Railways' poster campaign 'Visit London in Coronation Year', for example, showed mounted Life Guards trotting at speed passed the

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<sup>461</sup> It is, of course, possible to understand such connections as reproducing an ideology which masks the realities of military violence; see, for example, Michael Paris, *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850 – 2000*, London: Reaktion Books, 2000. Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War*, 104-05 and passim provides a nuanced account of the function and interpretation of military spectacle earlier in the twentieth century.

Victoria Monument (Figure 49).<sup>462</sup> As with Marsden's earlier image, the depiction of a small crowd of assembled onlookers cued an understanding of the soldiers as spectacle, while the 'Visit London' tag extended an invitation to the viewer to join the audience more literally. Charles Mozley's design for BEA took a similar approach, though here mounted soldiers are adjuncts in a representation of the Coronation procession itself, centred on the Gold State Coach (Figure 50).<sup>463</sup> As with the British Rail poster, the accompanying text ('Coronation London 1953 Fly BEA') connected the Coronation ceremony to the wider metropolis and encouraged visitors to London as a whole, the city acting as a stage set for linked royal and military pageantry offered as a tourist attraction.<sup>464</sup> While the travel advertisement had a venerable history, these posters were also part of a wider use of Coronation spectacle and imagery to boost a nascent, post-war consumer culture.<sup>465</sup>

Mozley himself was also a contributor to the RCA's *Coronation Lithographs* and the print he produced for the series, *Buckingham Palace Guard*, was closely related to his design for BEA (Figure 51). The RCA print was produced with looser dashes of colour (in a patriotic scheme) and focused on a single mounted soldier, but this figure was visibly derived from the same source as the left most horseman in the BEA poster.<sup>466</sup> This visual alignment

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<sup>462</sup> The poster was produced through photo-mechanical reproduction of Nicoll's commissioned oil.

<sup>463</sup> The poster is dated 1953, but it is hard to determine whether it represents a documentary record, an imaginative construction before the event, or a combination of the two. Its visual overlap with Mozley's RCA lithograph (discussed below) suggests pre-emptive composition, but the relation of the figure on the right to Mozley's oil painting, *Sir Harold Scott Accompanying the Coronation Procession*, purchased by the Government Art Collection, <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/sir-harold-scott-accompanying-the-coronation-procession-28906>, accessed 26 June 2018, suggests the reverse.

<sup>464</sup> As a BEA advertisement, the poster was potentially aimed at overseas as well as domestic visitors, though no foreign-language versions were located in this research.

<sup>465</sup> Mort, *Capital Affairs*, 26 – 28 and 40.

<sup>466</sup> The horse appears in slightly faster motion on the BEA poster, and the rider more braced, but both feature a mounted Life Guard in a breast-plate with plume flying and, most notably, both crop the front of the horse at the exact same point, to maximise the sense of outward motion. The direction of movement is reversed

underscores how the soldier imagery in Mozley's RCA lithograph can be understood in the light of his work for BEA. In the latter, the soldier stood for the wider attractions of pageantry, presented as a lure for the potential visitor; in the former, the symbolism was unchanged, though the explicit function was here limited to providing an attractive and affirmative image. The primary connotation of the ceremonial soldier in *Buckingham Palace Guard* was thus the pleasure of a good day out. As has been seen, Mozley's attempt to capture the dynamism of military pageantry – its colour and movement – was paralleled in other images of soldiers in the 1953 series, including those of La Dell and Trevelyan discussed above. All can thus be understood, to an extent at least, in a similar way: as emphasising pleasure, holiday and consumption rather than revived imperial values. Indeed, the art that had accompanied Britain's imperial zenith offered limited precedents for the depiction of ceremonial soldiers of the kind seen in the RCA prints. Within the Royal Academy tradition (closest to Britain's power structures) the preference was rather for pictures of battle; parades and dress uniforms were, instead, the domain of popular imagery, whether for advertisers, collectors or children.<sup>467</sup> As I have suggested, the association of lithography with these same forms and audiences helped Marsden, in 1951, to deploy soldier imagery with a more homely set of connotations, and prints among the Coronation series operated in similar territory.

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between the two images, supporting the idea of a common underlying design (hand-printing, in the RCA version, would reverse the direction of the original; offset lithography, in the poster, would maintain it).

<sup>467</sup> For the Royal Academy tradition of battle pictures see J.W.M. Hichberger, *Images of the Army: The Military in British Art, 1815 -1914*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988 and Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War*.

### ***Horse Guards in their Dressing Rooms: Soldiers, Dissent and Subculture***

Soldiers on parade were also the subject of Edward Bawden's contribution to the RCA series and, like La Dell and Trevelyan, he paired soldiery with the depiction of a London landmark, here a stylised Buckingham Palace (Figure 52).<sup>468</sup> The lithograph, *Life Guards*, was not, however, Bawden's first depiction of soldiers at the same location. In 1937, he had included a picture of guardsmen strutting in front of the Palace in a set of drawings reproduced in the *Peace Broadsheet* published by the Peace Publicity Bureau (Figure 53). The Bureau was itself an initiative of the AIA and designed to counter the government's increasing moves towards rearmament in the later 1930s. Bawden's original drawings were also shown at the AIA's 1937 Grovesnor Square exhibition and two, including the picture of guardsmen, were then reproduced again, this time in the *Left Review*.<sup>469</sup> The context for the drawings' publication and display was thus explicitly political, and Bawden's depiction of guardsmen was satirical, if relatively gently so, a common feature of his graphic work. The soldiers – here unmounted – were shown as absurdly puffed-up, their bulging chests and exaggerated swagger undercut by the careful, effeminate placing of their hands and feet, with their legs arrayed like those of a corps de ballets. Further, in the *Left Review*, the picture of guardsmen was twinned with a second design. This showed people in everyday scenes but with their faces turned into gas masks while overhead a mass of aircraft threatened delivery of the poison gas. Though this picture too was full of comic touches, the intent was serious, and pointed up the satire in the first: however glorious or absurd the display of guardsmen in dress uniform, Bawden

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<sup>468</sup> Though the building is identifiably Buckingham Palace, additional pillars are shown in the central portico.

<sup>469</sup> Radford, *Art for a Purpose*, 48; *Left Review*, May 1937, 234. The *Left Review* was founded in 1934 by the International Union of Revolutionary Writers.

suggested, such display disguised the real consequences of military expenditure and activity in the form of threatened civilians.<sup>470</sup> Such a satire on martial display would have had particular topical bite in 1937, as soldiers featured prominently in the Coronation of George VI in May, a month after the Grovesnor Square exhibition and the same month that the *Left Review* was published.<sup>471</sup>

Bawden's *Life Guards* thus creates a further, specific instance of the question already raised: given his anti-war stance, expressed in the context of an earlier Coronation and its military display, should his soldier image from 1953 necessarily be understood in terms of imperial revivalism, or were other interpretations possible? Bawden's own positions would, of course, have evolved in the intervening years. He had served as an official war artist (despite initial hesitation from officials on the grounds that he 'was a bit leftish') and seems to have left the AIA (though he remained a Labour Party supporter and in 1956 opposed Britain's Suez intervention).<sup>472</sup> Nonetheless, there are echoes of the *Peace Broadsheet* drawing in *Life Guards* that go beyond the Buckingham Palace backdrop. In both

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<sup>470</sup> Bawden had produced other images of soldiers. His early poster for London Underground, *Changing the Guard* (illustrated in Peyton Skipwith and Brian Webb *Edward Bawden's London*, London: V&A Publishing, 2011, 64) anticipates Marsden's use of toy-like figures, while his 1939 advert for Shell, 'Wellington Barracks but Shell Cheers' is similar to the *Peace Broadsheet* drawing and shares something of its satirical edge (a Christmas card based on this design is held in the Bawden archive at the Higgins Art Gallery and Museum, Bedford). He also produced other Coronation work on different themes, including a proposed decorative scheme for the exterior of Selfridges (ibid., 126-27) and illustrations for H.S. London's *The Queen's Beasts* published by Newman Neame in 1954 and illustrating James Woodford's temporary sculptures for Westminster Abbey.

<sup>471</sup> The *Left Review* was strongly critical of the monarchy: the May 1937 edition carried a prominent advert, on the back cover, for Kingsley Martin's critique *The Magic of Monarchy*; while its editorial had been particularly condemnatory towards the extravagance of George V's Silver Jubilee celebrations two years earlier. The military contribution to the 1937 Coronation is illustrated in Pathé News films available on-line, <https://www.britishpathe.com/>, accessed 28<sup>th</sup> June 2018.

<sup>472</sup> Quotation from Alan Ross, *Colours of War*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1983, 28. For AIA membership see 'Two files recording payment of membership fees, 1948-60', Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/11/3-4. For Bawden and Suez see Peyton Skipwith and Brian Webb, *Edward Bawden Scrapbooks*, London: Lund Humphries in association with the Fry Art Gallery, 2016, 16 and 191.

pictures, low hats and prominent chinstraps reduce the soldiers' facial features to mere hints, suggesting caricature, while the soldiers bodies, in both cases melded into a single form, share odd, top-heavy proportions and a comedic play of thin legs (though in the former case these are human and in the latter horse).<sup>473</sup> There are hints in the Coronation print, too, that the pageantry hides another reality of violence, with the guards' increasingly obscured faces and a heavily emphasised clenched fist (seeming to hold barely visible reins) on the right of the picture.<sup>474</sup> These cues are insufficient to view *Life Guards* as overtly satirical or as offering a developed critique of the Coronation's military display in the same manner as 1937 (though the associations of the print medium itself might licence such an interpretation). At the same time, however, they militate against the image being understood as a straightforward affirmation of a bullish narrative about Britain's global role embodied in military and monarchical display. For a viewer with a knowledge of Bawden's biography, the visual traces of pre-war commitments would have been all the more evident.

Like Bawden, Keith Vaughan produced an image of ceremonial soldiery for the *Coronation Lithographs* despite his own previous assertions of anti-militarism. Vaughan had lacked the commitment to political action that prompted other artists to join the AIA in the late 1930s, but nonetheless registered as a Conscientious Objector, and accepted a place in the non-combatant Pioneer Corps, following the outbreak of war, feeling a gut opposition to

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<sup>473</sup> The position of the helmet strap below the lower lip distinguishes the Life Guards from other mounted regiments where it is worn under the chin.

<sup>474</sup> In some impressions there's an indication of violent weather to come in a near-black sky behind the Palace. However, in the impression illustrated (Figure 52, held by the Victorian and Albert Museum, CIRC.326-1953) the background is a uniform dull grey.

violence for any ends (as Malcom Yorke puts it, ‘he wanted no part in killing fine young men in their prime’) and harbouring a confused understanding of what was at stake in the conflict.<sup>475</sup> His resulting experiences both confirmed his horror at war (he found an occasion where he was involved in moving mutilated corpses particularly traumatic) and established a dislike of what he perceived as the army’s culture of camaraderie-in-violence and its inefficiency.<sup>476</sup> Immediately after the war, Vaughan, like others, became specifically concerned about the destructive potential of nuclear weapons: in May 1946 he wrote of how the atomic bomb opened a vista on an ‘abyss of complete human annihilation’ and, despite his avoidance of organised politics, he later became a member of CND.<sup>477</sup>

Printmaking was a minor element within Vaughan’s oeuvre. His total production of lithographs amounted to eight images, all made between 1948 and 1953, with his contribution to the RCA’s series the last of these and with limited visual relationships to those that had preceded it. Though the title of this print, *Bandsmen*, used the plural, the image focused on a single drummer, apparently poised between beats (Figure 54).<sup>478</sup> The man’s face was shown in profile, eyes left in parade ground fashion, and he appeared to look beyond a second, heavily-cropped figure preparing to strike his own drum. Such a focal figure of a soldier-musician might have been expected to offer an individual instantiation of

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<sup>475</sup> The quotation is from Malcolm Yorke, ‘Introduction’, *Keith Vaughan*, exhibition catalogue, May – June 2012, Agnew and Sons, 9. For Vaughan’s earlier a-politicism see Malcolm Yorke, *Keith Vaughan: His life and work*, London: Constable, 1990, 36 (during the Spanish Civil War, Vaughan ‘showed no interest in politics and preferred to talk about ballet or art’). For Vaughan’s unfortunately generous initial view of Nazi war aims see Yorke, *Keith Vaughan*, 57 (non-combatant status was readily granted despite this).

<sup>476</sup> See Yorke, *Keith Vaughan*, 55 – 56.

<sup>477</sup> Quotation from Philip Vann and Gerard Hastings, *Keith Vaughan*, London: Lund Humphries, 2012, 59; on Vaughan’s CND membership see Emmanuel Cooper, *The Sexual Perspective*, London: Routledge, 1994, 226.

<sup>478</sup> There is some uncertainty over whether the print was editioned or produced solely as a proof; see Appendix 6 for a brief discussion.

the magnificence of the Coronation festivities, with their noise, colour and pride.<sup>479</sup>

However, there was also much about the image which was strange. The colouring of the uniform was non-naturalistic and biomorphic shapes lay within the soldier's outline.<sup>480</sup> His well-defined crotch indicated riding-boots (or possibly a leotard) even though he was dismounted and his cap obscured his gaze. Such features suggested the possibility of a different interpretation, that the print offered a critique of the whole idea of soldiers as providing celebratory spectacle, in a way which was more overt than Bawden's *Life Guards* and quite different to other images of soldiers in the series.<sup>481</sup>

*Bandsmen* is Vaughan's only representation of a soldier outside the observational sketches and drawings that he had made during his non-combatant service. Moreover, in the 1953 image, details of the bandsman's dress utilise markers of military uniform and authority which had been deployed in these wartime works, such as a rough inverted triangle for shirt pocket flaps and epaulettes with shoulder pips.<sup>482</sup> A connection was thus made with Vaughan's own private wartime experiences and resulting antipathy to the

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<sup>479</sup> This is the interpretation made by Robert Meyrick and Harry Heuser in their brief description of the print in "...poised on the edge".

<sup>480</sup> Meyrick and Heuser (ibid.) suggest that the extant copies of *Bandsmen* may have used a trial colour scheme, intended to be replaced by a more naturalistic rendering. This is not implausible, but there is no supporting documentary evidence and the existing colouring fits the other non-naturalistic elements of the print.

<sup>481</sup> Aspects of the image (the fetishistic rendering of the uniform, the fascistic, eye-obscuring cap, the wide shoulders and emphasised crotch) may suggest an affinity with homoerotic and sadomasochistic pornography, which was an established interest of Vaughan's and a feature of his private drawings (Yorke, *Keith Vaughan*, 67; 252-53). However, this is an anachronistic reading of the image. Erotic renderings of Nazi-style soldiery, as popularised by Tom of Finland, were not published until 1957 and uniform fetishism was not a feature of earlier physical culture magazines (see Cooper, *Sexual Perspective*, 233-37). Moreover, Vaughan's private erotic and pornographic drawings (which are based around nudity, not uniform) show no visual connection to *Bandsmen* (see Gerard Hastings, *Awkward Artefacts: The 'Erotic Fantasies' of Keith Vaughan*, Pagham Press in association with the Keith Vaughan Society, 2017 (no place of publication given)).

<sup>482</sup> See reproductions in *Keith Vaughan, Journal & drawings, 1939-1965*, London: Alan Ross, 1966, 21, 42, 49, 75, 80, 85 (epaulettes) and 42, 49, 80, 85 (pockets).



military, but these visual markers were also embellished to become strange, even grotesque. The shirt pocket-covers at the soldier's breast multiplied down his body, as if the external manifestation of internal organs. The epaulette to the viewer's right was defined by an oddly-shaped patch like a scapula, which then articulated with further semi-skeletal shapes that reach down the arms, the bodily interior again rendered visible. Although blocks of colour frequently disrupt the forms of limbs in Vaughan's oil paintings, these lack any such association with bone; similarly, his first lithograph, *The Woodman* from 1948, portrayed a figure with internal shapes but these were less developed (though some might suggest the external shape of muscle). By contrast, in *Bandsmen*, the effect was to suggest the flesh – even the organs and skeleton – beneath the soldier's dress uniform. The image revealed the body through which the soldier's other purpose – to inflict and receive violence – was realised.

At this same time in the early 1950s, the male figures that featured prominently in Vaughan's paintings (usually nude) were increasingly shown with round, bald heads, as the artist simplified representational forms and removed any element that hinted at narrative or character study. In *Bandsmen* the beginning of a similar bare scalp was, however, arrested by a cap, whose slight forward angle and flat top – seemingly too low for a normally developed cranium – suggest aggression. At the front of the cap an outsize visor, reaching almost to the tip of the nose, barred the soldier's vision while denying humanity to his face. The small triangle of black, blank eye-socket visible to the side underscored the idea of sightlessness. Alex Belsey has written on the importance of sight in Vaughan's art and also in

his (largely private) writing.<sup>483</sup> In Vaughan's understanding, Belsey suggests, the power of sight is essential to an individual's active, affirmative relationship with the world, while the reciprocated gaze forms the basis of connections between individuals. If we apply this proposal to *Bandsmen*, by being blinded by his uniform, the drummer was shown as both a victim of the institution he serves, but also less than fully human and hence potentially dangerous.

Blocked sight within the image threw an emphasis onto the idea of sound, and unlike the bandsmen's obscured eyes his one visible ear was bold and prominent. Music, and in particular the combination of music and movement in ballet, was of great importance to Vaughan, a point reflected in his elegant contribution to the 1951 *Lithographs, Dancers*. Equally, however, music which grated on his sensibility was a source of aversion; his wartime journals talk of how popular music on the wireless drove him to distraction.<sup>484</sup> The rhythmic drumming suggested by 'Bandsmen' was depicted in ways which stressed such an absence of harmony. The truncated figure depicted to the right (an unusual feature within Vaughan's oeuvre) was shown with the same raised arm gesture seen in the dancers of the 1951 print and many of Vaughan's other figure studies. However, rather than visually harmonising with this (as in the parallel gestures of *Festival Dancers*) the principal figure has his arms lowered, a stiffness suggested by their internal skeletal forms, and his drumsticks are crossed in a choreographed pause which might also be a gesture of refusal.

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<sup>483</sup> Alex Belsey, 'Outsider perspective: looking and being looked at in the wartime journal and sketches of Keith Vaughan', *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, 16:1, 2017, 3-14.

<sup>484</sup> Quoted in Belsey, 'Outsider perspective', 4.

I do not want to propose that there was a necessarily or straightforwardly oppositional reading of Vaughan's image: the choice of subject meant that it was certainly possible to see the print as a celebration of military ceremonial. However, *Bandsmen* was undoubtedly visually distinctive among those *Coronation Lithographs* which utilise soldier imagery, and the overt strangeness of its depiction invited an interpretation at odds with the simple enjoyment of an army band. Such spectacle, the prints would then suggest, offered only a harsh music beyond which lay the realities of the soldier's physicality, loss of individual vision, and relationship with violence, whether as victim or perpetrator. Certainly, *Bandsmen* is distinct in relation to the trajectory of Vaughan's art, an exception to the process of simplification which was eliminating markers of job or character from his figure studies. In his final lithograph, and in the context of the Coronation, the form offered Vaughan a space to engage with a different, even a more politically engaged, approach.

If the hint of satire found in Bawden's *Life Guards* works by emphasising his soldiers' lack of individuality, with minimal faces above entangled bodies; Vaughan's *Bandsmen* began to extract its particular subject from the larger military unit, suggesting how the institution impacts the individual. However, such an individuation was taken significantly further by John Minton in his print, *Horse Guards in their dressing rooms at Whitehall*, which radically extended the meanings associated with the soldier-subject within the *Coronation Lithographs* (as with Vaughan's *Bandsmen* the plural in the title was at odds

with the single soldier shown; Figure 55).<sup>485</sup> As seen in the previous two chapters, Minton was an experienced, if occasional, lithographer as well as one of several members of the RCA's painting staff who joined printmaking colleagues in the *Coronation* series.<sup>486</sup> In choosing a Guards regiment as his specific military subject, Minton kept company with La Dell, Mozely and Bawden, but his presentation was in striking contrast to these others and, indeed, to other approaches to the soldier within the visual art of the Coronation more generally. Rather than march or ride within a military display, Minton's lone soldier sat on a bed, slightly below the viewer and presenting a three-quarter profile. The scarlet tunic which La Dell and others deployed as metonym for the wearer, was shown hung up behind the seated figure whose remaining khaki clothes blended into the background. The uniform was thus revealed as a prop rather than the essence of the man, the print becoming the portrait of a performer rather than of the performance. The background of grand, royal-London architecture seen in other prints was also replaced, by a defined space which was both domestic (with bed and personal belongings) and unsettlingly claustrophobic (with the insistent bricks of the back wall, obscured windows, and high angle of view).

By making such deliberate and unusual choices Minton's picture seemed to stake a claim to be revealing an underlying reality: that behind the Coronation's mass spectacle lay such mundane preparations and individual lives. It would be naïve, however, to assume that

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<sup>485</sup> This title was used in 1953 and adopted in subsequent references to the work. However, it is somewhat mysterious: not only was a single soldier shown but he appears to be in a barracks rather than a dressing room and to be a member of a foot regiment in the Household (Guards) Division not a mounted unit (he has a bearskin, not a plumed helmet, and marching boots). The most plausible explanation (though lacking confirmatory evidence) seems that Minton submitted a title for his work, but made significant changes during its design. The sergeant's stripes on the soldier's uniform were, incorrectly, shown on the left arm of the jacket, possibly a result of reversal in the printing process.

<sup>486</sup> Other being Robert Buhler, Rodney Burn and Ruskin Spear.

the image is a simple transcription of empirical observation. Minton's re-use of compositional elements from his paintings in his lithography has already been noted and the 1953 print can again be related to contemporaneous works in other media (though not a single, near equivalent picture, as with *Banana Leaves/ Jamaica*). The main points of reference for *Horse Guards in their dressing rooms at Whitehall* were two oil paintings of Norman Bowler in the artist's studio: *Portrait of Norman Bowler*, from 1952, and *Painter and Model*, from 1953.<sup>487</sup> In each case the model was shown seated against floorboards, with structured clothing that included trousers tight to the waist and crotch, below a powerful torso. There was also a distinct facial resemblance between the guardsman in the print and Bowler, as he was shown in the portraits, while in the 1952 picture, Bowler, like the guardsman, was shown barefoot and from a high angle. Bowler himself was the last in a series of youthful models with whom Minton became infatuated and, while the two formed a close friendship, Minton's admiration for the younger, working-class man was always frankly homo-erotic; a sexual interest which left its traces in his portraits with their emphasis on Bowler's physical perfection and their phallogentric focal point.<sup>488</sup> The visual connection between the Bowler portraits and the guardsman represented in the Coronation lithograph thus opened up a particular potential meaning for the latter: as an object of gay desire. A discussion of the print in these terms opens Clare Barlow's 'Introduction' to *Queer British Art* where she cites the work as an exemplar of how an image can be opened to a queer reading

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<sup>487</sup> These works are reproduced in Spalding, *John Minton*, plates 18 and 19. The near vertical floorboards, disorienting the viewer's sense of perspective, were also found in Minton's large history painting *The Death of Nelson*, completed in 1952.

<sup>488</sup> Spalding, *John Minton*, 186-189; Faulkner describes Bowler as Minton's 'current romantic interest' (Simon Faulkner, 'Homo-exoticism', 173. Bowler's marriage in 1955 contributed to the decline in Minton's personality, Spalding, *John Minton*, 207-08.

through utilisation of historical knowledge. However, the specific information Barlow brings to bear is not, in fact, the visual connection to the Bowler portraits but rather a wider association between off-duty guardsmen and an informal trade in gay sex (particularly with older, wealthier men) which, it is noted, was available to ‘informed viewers’ in the early 1950s.<sup>489</sup>

While this trade stretched back into the nineteenth century, its prominent place in London’s sexual landscape during the mid-twentieth century has been elaborated in detail by Matt Houlbrook, its extent evidenced by police and newspaper reports. In 1951, for example, the *News of the World* reported on the trial of Robert B., a BBC official who had been arrested at his flat with several lifeguards. One soldier, Corporal W., reported how he had ‘been to the flat dozens of times with other troopers ... after we had something to eat and drink we would leave B. with a trooper. Besides buying us clothes, cigarettes, and drinks he would nearly always fork out a fiver.’<sup>490</sup> Published and private reminiscences provide a further source. John Lehmann’s lightly fictionalised memoir *In the Purely Pagan Sense*, for example, tells of a period in the 1950s when ‘the troopers were having a succès fou’ to the extent that their ‘popularity had gone to their heads’ and some were making £50 a week servicing a list of older admirers.<sup>491</sup> Houlbrook’s key point is not, however, to establish the extent of sex work by guardsmen, but rather the multiple, and often contradictory, ways

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<sup>489</sup> Clare Barlow, ‘Introduction’ in Clare Barlow (ed.), *Queer British Art*, London: Tate Publishing, 2017, 11.

<sup>490</sup> Matt Houlbrook, ‘Soldier Heroes and Rent Boys: Homosex, Masculinities, and Britishness in the Brigade of Guards, circa 1900–1960’, *Journal of British Studies*, 42, July 2003, 374. Houlbrook talks of a ‘cognoscenti’ familiar with the trade, but such reporting of trials involving guardsmen suggests that the association would be more broadly known, at least in outline, among the straight community.

<sup>491</sup> Quoted *ibid.*, 369–70.

that it was understood, both inside and outside the guards regiments. One frequent interpretation, for example, was that the sex was an exclusively commercial transaction, a way for guardsmen to fleece ‘poufs’. Yet the cases of soldiers who, in reminiscence, described their enjoyment of the sex or of the emotional intimacy with clients demonstrated that this could only be a partial understanding.<sup>492</sup> That said, certain aspects of the relationship were largely constant. In particular, the patrons in the trade were older and from a higher social class, with Houlbrook arguing that ‘the thrill of social transgression’ was a core part of the allure for many of these men, who saw in the working-class soldier something raw and authentically masculine.<sup>493</sup> For the client, the relationship with a guardsman thus instantiated a broader queer identity from the period: that of the dandified, aesthetic gentleman who enjoyed his bit of rough. The guardsman, from this perspective, had the particular advantage that his professional identity allowed (even required) him to take an interest in dress and personal appearance (a point central to Minton’s portrayal of the guardsman with his splendid jacket, neat cape, and carefully groomed bearskin) but without compromising an underlying sense of uncultured, proletarian masculinity.

The wider mid-twentieth-century narrative of queer aesthete and rough trade has been utilised by Simon Faulkner in an interpretation of Minton’s portraits of Normal Bowler. Faulkner relates the portraits to an earlier drawing (from around 1943) of a black serviceman who, like Bowler, was shown seated in Minton’s studio.<sup>494</sup> In particular, this drawing shares with *Painter and Model* the inclusion of a self-portrait in which Minton enacts the role of the

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<sup>492</sup> Ibid., 359-60.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid., 368.

<sup>494</sup> The drawing is reproduced in Faulkner, ‘Homo-exoticism’, 173.

picture's creator with his pens or brushes in hand. Thus, Faulkner suggests, Minton placed himself as an aesthete, an observer, desirous to fix and to possess the masculine vitality that was in front of him, while his young working-class subject was successfully assimilated to Minton's own territory – the artist's studio – and presented within an established gentleman-rough paradigm of his choosing. The soldier in *Horse Guards in their dressing rooms at Whitehall* might seem to occupy the exact same role, after all the image has visual parallels to the Bowler portraits while guardsmen in general were already associated with the erotic charge of a bit of rough. However, Faulkner's analysis also points to a contrast: in the case of the print, the soldier-subject was not transposed to Minton's studio, but rather sat on his own hard, barrack-room bed. The artist (literally or imaginatively) had come to the home of his subject – and it was a profoundly uncomfortable place for him and his queer gaze.

The communal, barrack-room setting that Minton depicted dispelled any possible sense of intimacy that the scene might hold. Despite the collection of personal belongings in the foreground, the room was portrayed without any domestic comfort, offering only the cast-iron, insistently-single bed placed within enclosing floorboards, rough brick wall and obscured window. The space was austere, even threatening. Shown within this, his home ground, Minton's guardsman was an ambiguous figure. He might be seen as a victim of these harsh conditions, dominated by the institution he served: he was shown as a diminutive figure relative to the scene, occupying less space than Bowler in the comparable portraits, and set below the viewers gaze. Though his physique and bearing were impressive, the redness of his skin was raw, vulnerable, and he was stripped of the scarlet



jacket which signified his martial status. Yet he might also be seen as a potential aggressor himself, a component in an atmosphere of threat. He was certainly represented as used to a fight: boots and a knuckle duster were amongst the items thrust forward on his bed.<sup>495</sup> Moreover, violence was an integral aspect of the sexual trade pursued by some guardsmen and a source of danger for their older, often professional, male clients. While relations could be affectionate, encounters frequently ended in blackmail, at best, or assault, at worst. Houlbrook cites the case of guardsman Roland B. who conducted a vicious assault and robbery on a man who had invited him home, then bought his comrades drinks with the stolen money.<sup>496</sup> This was in 1929, but in 1955 the pattern was unchanged, with Alfred Kinsey characterising young guardsmen as aggressive sexual predators, ‘dare devils’, and noting how the police ignored the way ‘queers’ were beaten up.<sup>497</sup> The prints’ reference, for ‘informed viewers’, to the association of guardsmen with a trade in gay sex necessarily also pointed to that trade’s underside of violence. As has been seen, Minton’s particular guardsman could be related to examples of his other young, working-class models (Bowler, the black soldier of the 1943 drawing) but in this case he remained unassimilated, difficult; depicted within a world alien to the artist, the soldier could still be an object of desire, but carried, too, an unstable mix of connotation, provoking possible reactions from sympathy to an edge of fear.

*Horse Guards in their dressing rooms at Whitehall* was thus both visually distinct among the multiple depictions of the soldier in the *Coronation Lithographs* and distinct in

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<sup>495</sup> The knuckle duster is the white, U-shaped object near the guardsman’s knee.

<sup>496</sup> Houlbrook, ‘Soldier Heroes’, 361 and 382-83.

<sup>497</sup> Mort, *Capital Affairs*, 2.

the meanings it made available. Once the potential for a queer interpretation among contemporary viewers is acknowledged, in the way that Barlow proposes, then the print may appear to have been a subtle act of sabotage aimed at the whole Coronation project: behind the military theatre and strutting masculinity of the procession, it would then suggest, was a nervy rent boy sitting on a bed. The image thus becomes more straightforwardly oppositional than others in the RCA series. However, such a straightforward and political reading was at odds with the uncertainty which permeates the image and Minton was certainly no republican ('We queens must stick together', he is quoted as saying at the time of the Coronation).<sup>498</sup> If the print does seem more evidently at odds with the intended mood of events than the other soldier images considered in this section – as it does – then this follows not only from its hints of illegal desire but also from the ambiguity and hesitation manifested in the face of celebration, from the way that the established national and martial symbolism of a guards regiment is qualified by the vulnerability of a lone young man given over to an institution, which is itself further qualified by signs of that young man's potential for aggression. Minton's image thus had particular qualities in relation to the larger series, but it is also possible to extend the point already made in discussing the Bawden and Vaughan prints: it would be unconvincing to characterise the work as oppositional, even for viewers able to recognise its queer possibilities, but it was antithetical to a straightforward assertion of martial masculinity invoked in the service of resurgent imperial values.

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<sup>498</sup> Quoted in Spalding, *John Minton*, 193.

In the *Coronation Lithographs* by Trevelyan and La Dell, simple dashes of colour stood for troops of soldiers in dress uniform. William Scott's print for the series, *Busby*, playfully explored quite how minimal a pictorial sign could become and still work in this context (Figure 56). A few blocks of colour and a declarative title were all there were to conjure a piece of emblematic headgear, while the particular soldier who should wear it had simply disappeared, leaving only an empty chin-strap.<sup>499</sup>

Scott was among the more prominent painters to take part in the *Coronation Lithographs*.<sup>500</sup> He already had some experience with the medium, having received a commission for the first Lyons series in 1947 and for the Victoria and Albert Museum's celebration of *150 Years of Lithography* in 1948, and he produced lithographs whilst a tutor at the Bath Academy of Art at Corsham Court.<sup>501</sup> He had also been scheduled for inclusion in the AIA's *1951* series but that had proved impossible and his lithograph *Harbour* was instead shown at the Redfern Gallery in December that year. In terms of colour and composition, *Busby* was strongly related to Scott's contemporaneous practice in oil painting, indeed it was a relatively early example of trends that were to become further embedded in his work in the course of the 1950s. Extensive use of orange had become a feature around 1952 (in, for

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<sup>499</sup> Scott's picture conveys all the crucial details of a busby, which in the British Army is worn by the King's Troop of the Royal Horse Artillery: a cylindrical shape, a draped 'bag' of cloth and a front plume.

<sup>500</sup> Scott's first solo show was at the Hanover Gallery, also in 1953, and in the same year twelve of his paintings were taken by the British Council to the São Paulo Biennial (he had a solo show in New York a year later). He taught at the Bath Academy of art from 1946 to 1956 but did not have an association with the RCA, as alumnus or teacher (he later became a visiting lecturer) and so was presumably invited to join the series.

<sup>501</sup> *150 Years of Lithography 1748-1948*, Leeds City Art Gallery; Norbert Lynton, *William Scott*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2004.

example, *Abstract*, 1952) and was pursued for the rest of the 1950s.<sup>502</sup> Patches of orange in Scott's oils, as in *Busby*, were often combined with black rectangles and thinner white strips, as with *Orange, Black and White Composition* from 1953 (Figure 57). Similarly, the form potentially indicating a plume in *Busby* related to a motif used in several paintings, where a pipe was formed between central forms and the edge (often the upper edge) of the picture.<sup>503</sup> Only the chin-strap in *Busby* appeared as an unaccustomed element, bending the image into a representational mode in collusion with the title. Its exceptional presence was, in effect, a wink: a sign that Scott was pulling off a clever – but effective – joke.

It was a joke that worked in a number of different ways. Like others in the series, Scott's print could be understood as a straightforward celebration of the Coronation. The bold black shape of the busby, set against waves of vibrant orange, might be taken to embody exactly the mix of a traditional British institution with youthful vigour and emerging glamour that, for its more progressive champions, was the promise of New Elizabethanism.<sup>504</sup> The colours and shapes were also, simply, fun. However, and again like other *Coronation Lithographs*, the image also carried the potential for alternative meanings less amenable to uncomplicated celebration. While Minton's lithograph extracted an individual soldier from his group identity and its signifiers (his ceremonial jacket and bearskin removed), Scott pursued an extreme version of the opposite course: only the

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<sup>502</sup> For Scott's painting during the period see Lynton, *William Scott* and Simon Morley and Michael Tooby, *William Scott: Paintings and Drawings*, London: Merrell Holberton in association with the Irish Museum of Modern Art, 1998.

<sup>503</sup> See, for example, *Grey, Black and White Forms, Study for a Painting* and *Black and White Abstract*, all from 1953 (illustrated in Lynton, *William Scott*, 137 – 39).

<sup>504</sup> See Morra and Gossedge, *The New Elizabethan Age*, 2-9.

uniform remained as the soldier vanished. The very wit of this disappearing act had the potential to de-naturalise the process whereby the underlying human was lost to the symbols of a collective military identity.

Viewed through a different set of contemporary concerns, Scott's empty busby might alternatively be seen as a joke about art and representation, a bold move given the way hostilities in the 'abstraction versus realism' debate had opened in the letters pages of the *Listener* two years earlier and continued to reverberate between the critics of the *New Statesman and Nation*.<sup>505</sup> Through the addition of a title and a chin-strap, a representational picture that fitted comfortably in a series aimed at a relatively wide and popular audience was fashioned from the elements of a challenging, abstract picture (and one of a piece with Scott's painting of the time, although the viewer did not need to be familiar with Scott's own oeuvre to get what was going on). Through this transformation of its parts, the print revealed something of the artifice – the tricks – that lie behind two-dimensional representations of the three-dimensional world, as well as the abstract qualities that lie within representational painting. At the same time as complicating ideas about representation, however, the print's transformatory trick also deflated the more overblown claims of modernist art-writers for the metaphysical properties of abstract form, claims associated with the pre-war writings of Roger Fry and Clive Bell but which remained

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<sup>505</sup> Garlake, *New Art, New World*, 40; Hyman, *The Battle for Realism*, 176. The champion of realism in the *New Statesman and Nation* was the independent Marxist John Berger, who took the term to encompass a broad range of representational art that was rooted in social realities; the representational image Scott pulls from his abstraction is notably distant from Berger's left-wing concerns, though there is no reason to think this was intended as satirical comment on Berger's critical line.

influential: a couple of twists and you could mistake ‘significant form’ for a hat.<sup>506</sup> In making such a joke, Scott was also poking fun at himself. In contemporaneous commentary on his own art, he stressed a hard fought struggle to suppress imagery within his painting and how he ‘longed for freedom from the object’, finding that ‘the insistence of the objects and their symbolic meaning ... interfered with my new interest’ in abstraction; his problem, he said, ‘was to reduce the immediacy of the individual object and to make a synthesis of “objects and space”’.<sup>507</sup> *Busby* took some of the means he had used to achieve this containment of objects (a limited colour palette, a reduction to generic shapes) and produced a picture that revelled in the insistence and immediacy of its object and the symbolism of that object in the context of the Coronation.

Earlier, I noted the limited range of subjects featured within the RCA series. Further attention to individual prints has shown, however, that this apparent restriction disguised a diversity of approaches to those subjects. Moreover, this combination of similarity and difference across the series helps answer the central question posed in this chapter: while the individual lithographs all offered – more or less – suitably celebratory pictures, their variety and their complexity nonetheless precluded any easy assimilation to the more reactionary threads of cultural politics resurgent in 1953, positions that were antithetical to

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<sup>506</sup> For the presence of Fry and Bell in post-war debate see Hyman, *The Battle for Realism*, 49, 63 and 134. The doctrine of ‘significant form’ (as an arrangement of pictorial elements with the power to move the viewer through ‘mysterious laws’) was first elaborated by Bell in *Art* (1914) and critically adopted by Fry see Frances Spalding, *British Art Since 1900*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1986, 61-62.

<sup>507</sup> Quoted by Norbert, *William Scott*, 116, from the catalogue for *The New Decade*, Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1955, 75 – 75; the quotation relates to paintings made between 1949 and 1953. Scott was interested in moments of equivocation between different possible referents and between objects and abstraction (witnessed by the titles of works such as *Abstract into Still Life*, 1953, and *Still Life into Nude*, 1954); *Busby* was related to this interest but, as the clarity of its title makes clear, an unambiguous referent crystallised from its potentially abstract forms.

several of the artists involved and to the lithographic tradition within which the series sat. Some images, such as Jones' *Coronation Coach*, suggested continuity with Festival narratives, others – in particular among the multiple depictions of ceremonial soldiers – contributed to the Coronation's military flavour but posed questions of its parade of assertive, martial masculinity even as they did so. By achieving a degree of unity in diversity, celebrating the Coronation while offering a range of responses, the series thus embodied something of the 'deep consensus' referenced by Peter Hennessey, though specific images also allowed interpretations that emphasised how that consensus could also exclude, as with Minton's references to a queer subculture.

In several of the examples considered here, it was the potential associations of lithography (with advertising, satire, or art for children) that opened the potential for meaning. In addition, among participants known primarily as painters, the creation of a *Coronation Lithograph* seems to have allowed an exploration of ideas that were present in their contemporaneous painting, but in ways that were distinctive and perhaps more socially engaged. In Scott's case, he also drew on visual features of his developing painting practice, but in doing so wittily up-ended his own stated philosophy of painting (perhaps exploiting lithography's association with satire). This does not mean, however, that *Busby* should be dismissed as anomalous or irrelevant to Scott's development or career (though it does not find a place in more recent critical writings on Scott).<sup>508</sup> Indeed, it played a minor but notable role in the promotion of Scott's work in continental Europe, being amongst the

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<sup>508</sup> See Norbert, *William Scott* and the catalogue essays by Michael Tooby and Simon Morley in Morley and Tooby, *William Scott: Paintings and Drawings*.

prints included in *Recent Artists' Lithographs*, part of the British Pavilion display at the 1954 Venice Biennale and paving the way for the dedicated exhibition of Scott's painting at the Biennale in 1958.<sup>509</sup>

### **The Royal College of Art Coronation Lithographs and RCA Culture**

In his own view, the beginning of Robin Darwin's tenure as Principal at the RCA, on the first day of 1948, was when a phoenix began to rise from the institution's ashes.<sup>510</sup> Neglected buildings, inadequate equipment and institutional torpor owed something to wartime privations but, in Darwin's diagnosis, just as much to the bureaucratic interference of the Ministry of Education. He responded with a set of reforms intended to liberate the College and to return focus to its founding mission: the promotion of excellence in art and design in the service of British commerce.<sup>511</sup> Darwin's institutional changes were a quirky mix of faux-tradition (starting a Senior Common Room) and more conventional modernisation (strengthening links with industry) but one effect was to establish printmaking as central to RCA activity.<sup>512</sup> A new School of Graphic Design was formed under the leadership of Richard Guyatt and this was to be the arena in which the College's fine art activity would seed its applied, commercial work, with the former providing inspiration and standards for the latter. The Printmaking Department (formally called the Etching

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<sup>509</sup> *Exhibition of works by Nicholson, Bacon, Freud*, exhibition catalogue, unpaginated; Sophie Bowness and Clive Phillpot, *Britain at the Venice Biennale, 1895 – 1995*, London: The British Council, 1995, 104 – 05 and 108 – 110. Three other lithographs by Scott were shown in 1954 and one other work with a relationship to the *Coronation Lithographs*, Geoffrey Clarke's *Crown* was also shown (see Appendix 6 for the status of this work).

<sup>510</sup> For Darwin's version of this history see 'The Dodo and the Phoenix', *passim*.

<sup>511</sup> The College was founded in the belief that "excellence in art and design would improve the quality of Britain's manufactures and enhance the visual environment", quoted in *The Spirit of the Staircase*, exhibition catalogue, Victoria and Albert Museum, November 1996 – March 1997, unpaginated.

<sup>512</sup> Seago, *Burning the Box*, 49-51 and 212. Jack Beddington, creative director for the Lyons Lithographs, was a member of the RCA's Council.



Department until 1961) moved into the new School and printmaking was taken to exemplify how fine art could spread its influence. As Guyatt later recollected: 'Inherent in the reorganisation of the College was the tenet that the fine arts are the inspiration of the applied arts. Hence the importance, within the School of Graphic Design, of the Printmaking Department which deals with graphic media as a fine art.'<sup>513</sup> The Department thus retained a strong fine art identity. Although La Dell gently bemoaned the small number of painting students who entered the print studio (as noted in *Chapter One*), Douglas Merritt, who came to the RCA with a degree in commercial design in the mid-1950s, perceived a friendly condescension in his own reception: 'I remember that there were people nearby us in the Engraving Department – Robert Austin and Edwin La Dell. They were very nice and friendly but they definitely gave us the feeling that we were the “commercial boys”'.<sup>514</sup> It was from this context that the RCA sponsored the artist-led print series for the Coronation (and, indeed, provided support for the *AIA 1951 Lithographs*). Publication of the prints sat among other ventures by the College aimed at generating income and, in particular, commercial experience for staff and students. Coronation year also saw, for example, the founding of the College's the Lion and the Unicorn Press, producing small, illustrated editions of book aimed at connoisseurs.

In his comprehensive study of the role played by the College in the emergence of British Pop Art from the mid-1950s, *Burning the Box of Beautiful Things*, Alex Seago gives

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<sup>513</sup> Quoted in Seago, *Burning the Box*, 26. The Darwin/ Guyatt philosophy – with an emphasis on applied arts but a primacy for fine art – owed something to the nineteenth century traditions of Morris and Ruskin, though Darwin embraced capitalism and modern technologies.

<sup>514</sup> Quoted in Seago, *Burning the Box*, 153.

considerable attention to its culture at the beginning of the decade (hostility to this being the common factor among otherwise disparate strands of Pop).<sup>515</sup> In Seago's account, the post-war RCA was dominated by an interest in the home nation and its perceived characteristics, that is by a 'vision of Englishness'.<sup>516</sup> This national character manifested itself in images of country life and in certain vernacular visual styles such as the naive folk art championed by Barbara Jones, whose influence marked the student magazine *Ark* in its early years, or the Victorian typefaces and woodblock printing that were taught in the College's schools.<sup>517</sup> However according to Seago, Englishness was also understood to be rooted in values and ideas. These values were in many ways nostalgic, finding validation in the past, but equally they were products of the recent experience of the war against the fascist powers. In the recollection of Raymond Hawkey, a student editor of *Ark*, there was a 'yearning for the old order that we had fought to defend and now wanted back with a vengeance'.<sup>518</sup> The high point for this culture at the College was, in many ways, the Festival of Britain, where it was in keeping with the Festival's own narrative of a domestic, egalitarian and peaceable national character rooted in (selected) tradition. The Festival's *The Lion and the Unicorn Pavilion* (with its interior designed by Guyatt, Gooden and Russell) was something of an RCA showcase and it was shown on the cover of the fourth edition of *Ark* (from spring 1952) which reviewed the college's Festival contribution. In this design by

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<sup>515</sup> Seago, *Burning the Box*, Chapter 3: 'English Good Taste'.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*, 55. The relationship of 'Englishness' to 'Britishness' is not discussed; as noted in my *Introduction*, the latter was common parlance in the period, though in England it was often rooted in (and synonymous with) the former.

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*, 54-61, 92.

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

David Gentleman, a suitably folk-art style river barge formed a (punning) modern ark that carried the *Pavilion*.<sup>519</sup>

In certain ways, the *Coronation Lithographs* seem to provide evidence that supports and extends Seago's account. Aspects of the series suggest that an interest in a demotic, potentially nostalgic, Englishness retained its purchase beyond 1951, both in relation to style and as an idea. In this the prints connected with other products of the college. *Ark 7*, for example, which was published alongside the *Coronation* in spring 1953, was given over to the theme of the sea as it has 'shaped our national culture' and saw it as defending the country from military threats but also protecting 'local culture' against the homogenising influence of international, industrial modernity, 'the encroaching forces of mediocrity, mass produced habits and applied opinions' according to an essay by Gentleman and David Weeks.<sup>520</sup> There may have been some cross-fertilisation between this edition of *Ark* and student work in the lithograph series by John Bowles and Jane Pickles that featured river boats, if not sea ships, were prominent via images of the royal barge (Figure 58).<sup>521</sup> While Pickles, in particular, utilised a naïve baroque style in the spirit of Barbara Jones, among the contributing staff and guests there was less obvious reference to vernacular styles, with the exception of Jones herself. La Dell's lithographic style, for instance, continued to reflect an influence from turn-of-the-century French work, as did that of Mozley. Stylistic influences

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<sup>519</sup> Illustrated *ibid.*, 63, plate 36.

<sup>520</sup> David Weeks, 'Editorial', *Ark 7*, quoted *Ibid.*, 64; David Weeks and David Gentleman, 'Saints and Sardines', *Ark 7*, quoted *Ibid.*, 64 (in making this statement, Weeks and Gentleman draw a parallel between the coasts of Cornwall and Brittany).

<sup>521</sup> A member of staff, Rodney Burn, also contributed an image of a boat, *Celebration on the Solent* showing a yacht bedecked with signal flags.

notwithstanding, however, the very connection of the series to the Coronation kept it close to a discourse of nation and tradition – evidenced by the dominance of the ceremonial soldier as a motif.

As mentioned at the start to this chapter, Seago's characterisation of RCA culture in the early 1950s as built around a concept of 'Englishness', both as a visual style and as an intellectual preference, has much in common with Anne Massey's idea of 'welfare state culture', discussed previously in relation to the *1951 Lithographs*. Indeed, Seago's detailed description of the post-war RCA might be seen to function as a reference case for Massey's broader concept, a point emphasised by the College's eager participation in the Festival of Britain, the event which Massey proposes as the defining example of welfare state culture in action. For both Seago and Massey, the dominant practices in post-war British visual art are taken to have combined nostalgia with a suspicion of the urban, the mass produced and the foreign, and to have been dissociated from a central narrative of European modernism.<sup>522</sup> Seago and Massey also share a common rationale for attending to the immediate post-war years at all: in each case the author is primarily focussed on constructing a history of innovation in the mid and later 1950s, for which the preceding period and its perceived cultural mainstream provide a foil. Despite this, and in contrast to Massey, much of Seago's account of the years preceding and encompassing Festival and Coronation is sympathetic

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<sup>522</sup> Massey, however, sees neo-Romanticism as the house style of welfare state culture, while, beyond giving a home to Minton, this was not a major feature of work at the RCA. Seago claims (*Burning the Box*, 57) that 'The Victorian revival in architecture and graphic design was intimately linked to the Neo-Romantic movement in painting and illustration' but does not substantiate this beyond a shared appeal to national tradition (though even here, neo-Romanticism also had the Paris-based Pavel Tchelitchew and Eugène Berman as points of origin); the attitudes and programmes of the two groups, such as they were, had little in common.

and alert to their complexity. As has been seen, he recognises that the apparently nostalgic and parochial might also reflect progressive reconstruction after wartime (in quoting Hawkey) or a reasonable critique of the developing shape of industrial modernity (in citing Weeks and Gentleman). Nonetheless, the danger of teleology remains, of characterising the art and ideas of the period in the reductive terms set by those who followed and who established their identity through its rejection.<sup>523</sup> For example, when Seago concludes that Pop offered ‘an alternative to the cosy images of “Englishness” favoured by the Establishment’, the claim is based on a slight of hand and exceeds the actual evidence provided.<sup>524</sup> For while the visual expression of Englishness had been dominant among the RCA’s teaching staff (though such ideas were also popular with students) this was an establishment only within the narrow confines of the College, and though Seago establishes that the Principal, Darwin, was part of a wider ‘Establishment’ – being upper-middle-class in his origins and connections – he had almost no impact on the College’s visual culture. More importantly, reference to an ‘Establishment’ taste, with its connotations of an underlying, permanent power structure, ignores the detailed texture of the period’s shifting politics, or even events on the scale of Labour’s ejection from office in 1951 which, as has been shown, provides an important context for interpreting works such as the *Coronation Lithographs*).

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<sup>523</sup> A Foreword by Len Deighton (an RCA student and art editor for *Ark* in 1954) is unapologetic in seeing the 1950s as interesting only in as much as they gestated the 1960s (on one view of the latter’s meaning): ‘How the tatty mess of 1951 became the exciting mess of the “swinging sixties” is a miracle yet to be fully explained’ and damning any opposition to American-inspired production values (Seago, *Burning the Box*, xi).

<sup>524</sup> Seago, *Burning the Box*, 207; it should be acknowledged that Seago’s main thrust here is that Pop itself had become a commercial phenomenon by mid-1960s.

My reason for addressing Seago's argument here thus reprises that rehearsed in the last chapter in relation to Massey's concept of 'welfare state culture'. It is a concern that an art historical narrative in which the post-war years are taken to produce, primarily, tired images of Englishness obscures the interest and interpretative potential of work created in the period. This is a particular risk for the *Coronation Lithographs* precisely because they offer some confirmation of Seago's thesis, expressing visions of Englishness for the royal event and in established styles. However, as has been seen, it is wrong to assume that this results in a predictable or narrow vision. Rather, engagement with the Coronation produced images marked by the tension between a newly confident cultural conservatism and a retained social democratic optimism, as well as complex personal responses incorporating enthusiasm and dissent. In concluding the last chapter, I proposed that an alternative interpretation of the term welfare state culture could help reframe how such post-war art is looked at and thought about. If it is used as a way to reference post-war art that was popular, modern and sympathetically engaged with the development of social democracy in Britain – an art for which prints provided an amenable medium – it can help turn attention to these works and their diverse relationships with a central moment in Britain's twentieth-century history. This chapter has shown how the Coronation series drew on the tradition of the earlier AIA lithographs, and the Coronation images discussed here illustrate the routes by which images in this tradition could navigate the new terrain of 1953. Visual art falling under a revised concept of welfare state culture thus did not simply cease with Labour's ejection in 1951. Rather the attitudes and ideas of 'New Britain' could live on, more or less comfortably, within the 'New Elizabethan Age', and utilising a revised concept of welfare state culture can help to draw attention to this development and its complexities. A print

such as Jones' *Coronation Coach* was able to carry meanings that celebrated the Coronation while also holding to aspects of the Festival and its appeal to 'the people' as the embodiment of the nation – notwithstanding an approach to the people's culture via the scholarly terms of a folk revival. Other examples from the series made use of the military imagery that saturated the Coronation, but added the potential for this to gain new meaning, through reference to the anti-military satire of an earlier era in the case of Bawden's *Life Guards* or through intimations of a gay subculture, as in Minton's print. In these latter examples, there is less of a positive adherence to the social democratic values of 1951 and more of an estrangement from the tone of the Coronation procession itself, even a return to the oppositional positions of the 1930s. Consideration of prints from the *Coronation Lithographs* thus shows how a renovated concept of welfare state culture retains relevance beyond 1951 but also evolved and, inevitably, began to retreat in the context of a new political dispensation.

This argument for recognising complexity in the work of the early 1950s does not, of course, negate Seago's more general claim that the RCA was a principal site for the development of a different visual art culture from the middle of the decade. Those involved were concerned to look outside Britain, whether to Europe or North America, and to engage with the increasingly ubiquitous images of commercial culture, whether as critical modernists or enthusiastic consumers. These changes form a part of the context for the chapter that follows and that explores the activities and publications of St George's Gallery Prints, established in the year after the Coronation, 1954. The RCA itself was also involved in

two further lithograph series, both under La Dell's leadership: *Wapping to Windsor*, comprising views of the Thames and published in partnership with St George's Gallery Prints in 1960; and *The Shakespeare Series*, a collaboration with the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1964.<sup>525</sup> Both were aimed at a relatively broad audience but neither was connected to a current national event. This may have been for straightforward commercial reasons (so stock did not become dated), due to the lack of a suitable occasion, or possibly because a weakened sense of national identity at the College made such a venture implausible. The tradition initiated with the *AIA 1951 Lithographs* thus came to a swift end with the RCA's *Coronation series*.

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<sup>525</sup> This is dated to 1957-58 in the exhibition catalogue for *The Spirit of the Staircase*, but that appears to be an error, see *Wapping to Windsor*, St George's Gallery Prints, 2<sup>nd</sup>– 25<sup>th</sup> July 1960, unpaginated.



**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**'THE QUIET REVOLUTION': St GEORGE'S GALLERY PRINTS, TRANSITION**  
**AND CONTINUITY IN THE LATER 1950s**

In the year after the Coronation, Robert Erskine opened St George's Gallery Prints, tucked at the back of Agatha Sadler's art bookshop in Cork Street and bringing to London's West End a dedicated, if bijou, print retailer.<sup>526</sup> Contemporaries were swiftly aware of Erskine's energy and focus. In 1956, Myfanwy Piper claimed that his efforts were making art-buyers 'more aware of the vitality of prints' and a year later the *Times* characterised him as 'that tireless champion of printmaking'.<sup>527</sup> Erskine himself felt that it took three years for the gallery to hit its stride, but by the turn of the 1960s it was the established critical consensus that he had given decisive new impetus to a moribund field.<sup>528</sup> Robert Wraight, in the *Tatler*, saw him as the instigator of a 'Quiet Revolution' in prints' popularity while the *Illustrated London News* referred confidently to the 'recent revival in printmaking by the young men of to-day' and ascribed it to 'the enterprise of, and enthusiasm of, the St George's Gallery'.<sup>529</sup>

Erskine's reputation as the leading promoter of contemporary British printmakers was deserved. However, his actions in relation to St George's Gallery Prints were not

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<sup>526</sup> Despite its prominence in the print historiography, some basic facts about St George's Gallery Prints are uncertain, including its opening date. In Appendix 7, I review available evidence to establish (as far as is possible) when it opened and closed and its relationship to other concerns that used a similar name. Appendix 8 lists the exhibitions that the gallery hosted.

<sup>527</sup> Myfanwy Piper 'The Painter-Engraver', the *Sunday Times*, 15 July 1956, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 992/8/5 (though Piper's praise for Erskine was in part about his importation of French prints); 'Vituperative Hogarth: Engravings which repay attention', the *Times*, 25 July 1957, 3.

<sup>528</sup> Robert Erskine, 'St George's Gallery Prints', Charles Spencer (ed.), *A Decade of Printmaking*, London: Academy Editions, 1973, 20.

<sup>529</sup> Robert Wraight, 'The Quiet Revolution', the *Tatler*, 14 November 1962, 443; Frank Davis, 'A Page for Collectors', the *Illustrated London News*, 14 Oct 1961, 630.

altogether straightforward. Founding the gallery was his first professional project, coming shortly after he graduated from Cambridge as an archaeologist, and from the outset it was his private wealth that gave scope for such entrepreneurial activity.<sup>530</sup> When a profile was published in the *Studio*, the author placed ‘the Honourable Robert Erskine’ in a tradition of aristocratic patrons rather than as a commercially-minded business owner, while in an accompanying photograph Erskine posed as beat impresario – all Chelsea boots and black sweater.<sup>531</sup> Moreover, some elements of the gallery’s operation did have the air of a pet project and none more so than its peremptory closure, in 1963, prompted by the increasing success of Erskine’s other long-held ambition, for a career combining film, television and antiquity.<sup>532</sup>

This exit notwithstanding, subsequent commentary accepted and developed contemporary acclaim for Erskine’s role in the field, citing him as the main agent in ending printmaking’s ‘barren years’, his activity indicative of previous torpor. Pat Gilmour, for example, described Erskine as the ‘pioneer’ of a ‘print renaissance’, while Margaret Garlake claimed that ‘by the time he left the art world ... the print boom was underway’.<sup>533</sup>

However, as a consequence of this narrative St George’s Gallery Prints has itself been thought about primarily in relation to printmaking’s future, valued less for itself than as a

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<sup>530</sup> ‘Robert Erskine has a private income and without it could not have survived as a promoter, enthusiast, gallery director and specialist’ (Bryan Robertson, ‘Preface and a Profile’, *The Graven Image*, 1959, 2-5, 5).

<sup>531</sup> G.S. Whittet, ‘The Newer London Galleries: The St George’s Gallery’, the *Studio*, 163:829, May 1962, 190.

<sup>532</sup> Robert Erskine, ‘St George’s Gallery Prints’, 22 – 23. From late 1962, Erskine introduced a short slot, ‘Collector’s Piece’ on ITV (the *Daily Mail*, 13 Sept. 1962, 14); his underlying interest in archaeology had also become apparent through publication of artists’ copies of palaeolithic rock art. Appendix 8 suggests that activity at the gallery was already winding down somewhat from 1960, with increasing emphasis on the annual *The Graven Image* survey exhibitions, held annually from 1961 after a first iteration in 1959.

<sup>533</sup> Pat Gilmour, *Artists at Curwen*, London: The Tate Gallery, 1977, 95; Margaret Garlake, ‘Salerooms’, *Art Monthly*, 61, November 1982, 36.

catalyst for what followed.<sup>534</sup> Erskine's venture is understood as oriented towards the mid-1960s 'print boom' when, it is claimed, printmaking became central to a renovated British modernism fascinated by mass culture and semiotics.<sup>535</sup> The only substantive disagreement is between those who see the gallery solely as a precursor of the boom and those for whom it was the first manifestation.<sup>536</sup>

This chapter offers an alternative account, attending to St George's Gallery Prints in its own context. In this, it extends to Erskine's operation a central argument of the wider thesis, that post-war printmaking can be fruitfully understood in relation to its antecedents and immediate situation as much as teleologically, through its relationship with the art and prints of the mid-1960s. The gallery's roster of artists was largely taken from an established post-war generation and, I argue, images that they produced offered a complex engagement with existing cultural considerations as well as emerging themes. These points are elaborated later in the chapter through a close examination of two print suites, six sugar-lift aquatints by Merlyn Evans, published in 1958, and six etchings by George Chapman, from 1960, the latter counterpointed by a single, contemporaneous lithograph by Josef Herman.

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<sup>534</sup> This perception was encouraged by the way that Erskine folded the gallery's remaining stock, on its closure, into Editions Alecto, which had been founded in 1972 and was soon to become Britain's most prominent imprint and of which he remained 'a very sleepy director' (Erskine, 'St George's Gallery Prints', 23).

<sup>535</sup> For an undiluted version of this interpretation of the 'print boom' (though with Editions Alecto at its origin) see David Mellor, 'Foreword', Tessa Sidey, *Editions Alecto: Original Graphics, Multiple Originals 1960 – 1981*, Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Lund Humphries, 2003, 9-10; see also Julia Beaumont-Jones, *A Century of Prints*, 16-24. Richard Riley has offered a revisionist line on Erskine's role, noting that his choice of artists reflected 'an earlier period in British art rather than heralding the new decade'. However, his point of reference remains the 1960s and Erskine is celebrated for initiating change that was to progress beyond him (Riley, 'Introduction', *As Is When: A Boom in British Printmaking 1961 – 1972*, 8).

<sup>536</sup> For an example of the former see Joe Studholme, 'The Second Decade', Spencer (ed), *A Decade of Printmaking*, 94 ('In 1962 the much vaunted "print boom" had yet to happen' despite Erskine's efforts) and for the latter, Benedict Nightingale, 'A Licence to Print Originals', *New Society*, 228, 9<sup>th</sup> February 1967, 206 ('most commentators date the boom as recently as 1955 when Robert Erskine opened his St George's Gallery in Cork St'). Both authors have reservations about the 1960s boom.

The chapter proposes that these publications addressed concerns that had been central to the development of modern art: primitivism, in the case of Evans, and the tension between permanence and change, in the case of Herman and Chapman.<sup>537</sup> Though modernist themes had been present in prints from earlier in the period (Scott's *Busby*, for example, playing with issues of abstraction), these examples suggest some evolution in printmaking, with the products of St George's Gallery Prints more obviously integrated with the wider artistic field. In each case, however, the prints also offered a distinctive approach and, in particular, a contrast to the way these same issues were to be developed within the artistic culture of the following decade.

Earlier chapters have argued that post-war prints – at one side of the artistic mainstream – held distinctive possibilities for meaning. In particular, prints' (and especially lithographs') reputation as a democratising form seemed to facilitate reflection on immediate social and political issues. As will be discussed, Erskine's own attitude to the democratising conception of prints was ambiguous, while the works considered here illustrate his promotion of a range of print media. Nonetheless, these examples also show prints continuing to engage with contemporary political concerns and illustrate how all kinds of prints – with their particular inherited associations – retained a potential as distinct spaces for meaning.

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<sup>537</sup> References for these themes within modern, and modernist, art are given in the relevant sections but see in particular, for primitivism, Lisa Tickner, *Modern Life and Modern Subjects*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000, 206 – 210; and for permanence and change, Harrison, *English Art*, 260.

The idea of welfare state culture was less immediately relevant at this time, with a second Conservative government (from May 1955) and the 'post-war consensus' beginning to fray, and I do not develop the term further.<sup>538</sup> Nonetheless, it left a visible legacy, and the works considered all retained a sympathetic engagement with the problems of social and political development that had been faced immediately after 1945. In the case of Merlyn Evans' suite, the prints' late and idiosyncratic engagement with the concept of 'primitivism' linked them to an idea of colonial partnership and mutual respect that had been prominent in progressive opinion of the late 1940s. In the prints by Herman and Chapman, the shared interest in a Welsh mining community echoed the inclusive, unifying narrative of Britain's places and people told by the Festival of Britain. In Herman's case, this was emphasised by a visual parallel with his earlier Festival mural. In Chapman's case, additional themes of consumerism and mass communication suggested a reality of continuing social change and showed a St George's Gallery Prints' publication engaged with newly emerging concerns, though through a realist aesthetic that contrasted with the Pop Art printmaking that was soon to tackle similar ideas.

Before turning to specific print images, however, my opening section examines Erskine's activities and approach, providing a fuller institutional history for St George's Gallery Prints than has previously been available.<sup>539</sup> In doing so, it establishes something of

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<sup>538</sup> On post-war consensus and its duration see Hennessy, *Having it So Good*, 360.

<sup>539</sup> See also Appendices 7 and 8. Evidence is assembled from the gallery's catalogues and contemporary journalism as well as the limited subsequent historiography (Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 21 – 22 and 205 being the primary source); I am not aware that a gallery archive exists.

the gallery's range and offers initial evidence for my claim that it was oriented to its own agendas and to the preceding period as much as to the future. As part of this overview, the discussion returns to issues of prints' status and their role in democratising art ownership which were first raised in *Chapter One*, tracing how these ideas evolved in the second half of the 1950s and the beginning of the next decade.

### **'I suppose that's what I was aiming to bring about': Robert Erskine and the Printmaking Field in Britain after 1954**

Erskine's key commercial innovation was to integrate the roles of print retailer and publisher and this provided his clearest legacy to print selling in the mid-1960s.<sup>540</sup> Such a dual role served Erskine's desire to deliver Parisian standards of finish across St George's Gallery Prints' merchandise: taking on publication gave control over production issues such as paper quality, cleanliness of margins and depth and consistency of colour.<sup>541</sup> The same aim also motivated his involvement with the creation of the Curwen Studio in 1958, a more direct import of the Parisian atelier model led by directors of the commercial printing company the Curwen Press. The facility was focused exclusively on supporting artists' lithography, with high production values and a collaborative relationship between artist and expert printer.

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<sup>540</sup> The approach was adopted by Editions Alecto and the Curwen Gallery (who also utilised in-house printing facilities) along with Marlborough Fine Art's New London Gallery and others. There was some precedent: as noted, the Redfern Gallery published prints as well as selling others', notably from Miller's (see Gilmour, 'Curiosity, trepidation'). Nor was everything sold at St George's self-published, in particular as it was getting started: it took other publishers' stock and sold work from artists on a sale or return basis (Robert Erskine, 'Introduction', *Colour lithographs and etchings by contemporary British masters 1956*, exhibition catalogue, St George's Gallery Prints, August 1956; Robert Erskine to Merlyn Evans, 17 October 1954, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 896/1/1/1; see also Sidey, *Editions Alecto*, 11/12; Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 22); even at the 1962 *The Graven Image* exhibition, work published by Ganymed (from Sydney Nolan) was included.

<sup>541</sup> Robert Erskine, 'St George's Gallery Prints', 20.

Although Erskine had no financial stake or formal position in the studio, he was instrumental in securing Stanley Jones to head operations and subsequently used it for his own lithographic publications.<sup>542</sup> Across media, Erskine's commissions included single works but a further innovation was his introduction of the themed print 'suite', the name nodding to Ambroise Vollard's publications of Picasso in the 1930s. These usually comprised six to eight prints on a particular theme, but sometimes more. Retrospectively, Erskine described his motivation for this move as primarily commercial (presumably because of the potential to generate publicity around them and to sell full suites at a slightly reduced rate) but he also noted how artists gained an opportunity for a sustained encounter with an idea and a technique and how the suite had become an established part of subsequent publishing.<sup>543</sup>

Commercial considerations meant that the gallery's early exhibitions included Japanese and contemporary French prints, for which the market was established.<sup>544</sup> However, Erskine was also interested in international exchange and an international profile and he continued to show foreign artists (later publishing suites by the Indian Laxman Pai and Paris-based Austrian Ernst Fuchs) as well as promoting the gallery's British prints overseas.<sup>545</sup> Although his intentions were thus anything but parochial, a focus on British

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<sup>542</sup> The venture was wholly owned by the Curwen Press and initially located alongside their premises in Plaistow, East London. Stanley Jones had spent over a year in the Paris atelier of Gérard Patrice after leaving the Slade and was able, as a practising artist and a technically fluent lithographer, to act as a sympathetic interpreter of artists' ideas and an authoritative intermediary with the Studio's editioning printers (Jones, *Stanley Jones*, 59 – 61). On a smaller scale, 1958 also saw the founding of the 'Print Workshop' in London by Birgit Skiöld, a lithography and etching facility also based on the atelier model (Clive Jennings, 'Birgit Skiöld and the Print Workshop', *Fitzrovia News*, <https://news.fitzrovia.org.uk/2011/04/03/birgit-skiold-and-the-print-workshop/>, accessed 4<sup>th</sup> October 2018).

<sup>543</sup> Robert Erskine, 'St George's Gallery Prints', 22; see also Riley, 'Introduction', *As Is When*, 12 (with Eduardo Paolozzi's *As Is When* for Editions Alecto in 1965 providing an example of a later suite).

<sup>544</sup> Whittet, 'The Newer London Galleries: The St George's Gallery', the *Studio*, 163:829, May 1962, 191.

<sup>545</sup> See Appendix 8 for details.

work was, nonetheless, part of St George's Galley Prints' identity and its main impact was on the profile of domestic printmaking. The gallery's first two annual survey exhibitions, starting in 1957, referred to British art in their titles, while Bryan Robertson's introduction to the first *The Graven Image* exhibition in 1959 (which extended the previous annual surveys in the larger surroundings of the Whitechapel Art Gallery) promised a cross-section of work from the 'livelier artists in England' (a contrast to the transatlantic positioning adopted by publishers from the mid-1960s).<sup>546</sup> British artists were, inevitably, the main beneficiaries of Erskine's attempts to drive up production standards.

The appeal of prints to Erskine lay in the act of making, and its material traces, as much as in the visual imagery itself; he 'encouraged the fundamental idea that [with a print] one was looking primarily at printing, the imagery should come second – even a poor second'.<sup>547</sup> He credited his decision to open the gallery to a trip to the Atelier Lacourière in Paris and, in describing the visit, emphasised his interest in printmaking's involved technologies and craft skill. St George's Gallery Prints, he said, was born from 'the pungent odour of printing ink'.<sup>548</sup> A similar stress informed many of the gallery's subsequent activities. In 1956, for example, Erskine produced a film, *Artist's Proof*, in which six artists each demonstrated a different printmaking technique while creating a work for the gallery. The film was primarily a promotional tool, but it was rooted in the idea that the interest and

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<sup>546</sup> Robertson, 'Preface and a Profile', 2 (Robertson uses England as synonymous with Britain; Scots, Welsh and Northern Irish artists, by birth, participated); Erskine described the equivalent 1962 show as involving 'Professional British artists or foreign visitors working in Britain' (*The Graven Image*, Gallery of the Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours, 1 – 26 May 1962, unpaginated). For exhibition titles, and the progress of Erskine's annual survey exhibitions, see Appendix 8. For a later transatlantic focus see Sidey, *Editions Alecto*, 13-15 and Charles Spencer, 'A Decade of Printmaking', Spencer, *A Decade of Printmaking*, 11.

<sup>547</sup> Quoted from the *Arts Review* in Charles Spencer, 'A Decade of Printmaking', 10.

<sup>548</sup> Robert Erskine, 'St George's Gallery Prints', 20.



validity of prints flowed from the particularities of their making, as well as a traditional view of what counted as an 'autograph' print that required the artist's manual engagement with production.<sup>549</sup> Similarly, the catalogue for the 1959 *The Graven Image* show included careful descriptions of different procedures.<sup>550</sup> Erskine saw the need for technical mastery of any print process as requiring craftsmanship and that craftsmanship as the guarantee of artistic quality: 'the multifarious techniques of which [the printmaker] must be aware before he can make a good print necessitate a standard of craftsmanship in this medium, which may not be so pressing in painting.'<sup>551</sup> His ideal was thus for a deep engagement between an artist and a technique, with that technique selected for its particular qualities as an integral part of the creative process.<sup>552</sup> The commissioning of suites was one practical result of this, as was a willingness to publish works in a wider range of print media than had been common in the preceding decade. Etching, for example, remained associated with the 1920s boom and its unfashionable styles when Erskine published Anthony Gross's set of eight etchings, *Le Boulevé Suite*, in October 1956, which brought to the medium a new scale and experimentation in mark-making (Figure 59).<sup>553</sup> Overall, Erskine's activities thus simultaneously consolidated

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<sup>549</sup> For details and descriptions of the film see *British Graphic Art 1957*, exhibition catalogue, St George's Gallery Prints, July 1957, unpaginated; 'Come and See my Etchings', the *Times Literary Supplement*, 12<sup>th</sup> April 1957, 493-495; it lasted 25 minutes and was shown alongside a main feature at the Academy Cinema in Oxford Street. No copies of the film are available in the UK, though it is held by New York Public Library. For debates about what constituted an autograph print, as this related specifically to lithography, see Appendix 3.

<sup>550</sup> *The Graven Image*, 1959, 9-12. Erskine's opening to a later catalogue is contradictory: 'Brief explanations of the print-making process not only bore but they also confuse. Nor are they really necessary. ... Let us forget about the difference between lithography, etching, aquatint, block-printing, silk-screen and the rest' (*The Graven Image*, 1962, unpaginated); this suggests a willingness to respond to market feedback and, perhaps, a waning of interest in his print project.

<sup>551</sup> Robert Erskine, 'Introduction', 1956, unpaginated.

<sup>552</sup> See, for example, the introduction to the catalogue for *British Graphic Art 1957*. Erskine was, however, critical of an academic fetishisation of approved technique, damning the 'little black etching' in the 1959 *The Graven Image* catalogue (Robert Erskine, 'Introduction', *The Graven Image*, exhibition catalogue, Whitechapel Art Gallery, April-May 1959, 6).

<sup>553</sup> 'Signs of Revival in Etching', the *Times*, 24<sup>th</sup> October 1956, 3; *Anthony Gross: 8 etchings*, exhibition catalogue, St George's Gallery Prints, October-November 1956.

the place of lithography as the dominant print medium (in particular via foundation of the Curwen Studio) while also broadening the base of print media acceptable to the market.<sup>554</sup>

Such attention to the process of printmaking contrasted sharply with the earlier attitude of Miller's Press, despite the way the latter was cited as an immediate antecedent for St George's Gallery Prints by contemporaries.<sup>555</sup> As noted in *Chapter Two*, Miller's operation relied on posting lithographic transfer paper, with the aim of attracting well-known painters to the project by minimising unfamiliar technical requirements and avoiding artists having to enter the printer's shop. However, nor did the focus on a diversity of print media or on craft practice set a precedent for the decade that followed.<sup>556</sup> The most often remarked features of printmaking from the mid-1960s were to be the dominance of one medium, screenprinting, and an emphasis on iconography rather than technique, in particular the exploration of the imagery of popular and commercial communication.<sup>557</sup>

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<sup>554</sup> Lithography was, notably, the first term in the glossary concluding the catalogue for *The Graven Image* exhibition in 1959 and the largest medium represented (though Carey and Griffiths note that the combined intaglio forms outnumbered lithographs at the show by 69 to 57, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 205). Early in the life of St George's Gallery Prints, Erskine seems to have been interested in improving the infrastructure for intaglio prints; the catalogue for an exhibition by S.W. Hayter states the pair were working on a London centre for Hayter's Atelier 17, with its emphasis on intaglio methods, but this seems to have come to nothing (*S.W. Hayter – engravings etchings lithographs*, exhibition catalogue, St George's Gallery Prints, 15th March – 16th April 1955).

<sup>555</sup> Bryan Robertson, 'Preface and a Profile', 2.

<sup>556</sup> There was an immediate spike of interest in etching, leading, for example, to its adoption by David Hockney in his early 1960s prints such as the *A Rakes Progress* (1961-63) series. At the 1962 iteration of *The Graven Image*, the main section included 34 lithographs and 23 etchings (excluding aquatint) while the student section had 22 lithographs but 23 (again) etchings.

<sup>557</sup> These features are considered further in my *Conclusion*. For the dominance of screenprints see Sidey, *Editions Alecto*, 15 and Pat Gilmour, *The Mechanised image: An Historical Perspective on 20th Century Prints*, London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978, 88; St George's Gallery Prints published some screenprints and Erskine contributed the forward to the catalogue of an ICA screenprint exhibition in 1956 (Pat Gilmour, 'R. B. Kitaj and Chris Prater', *Print Quarterly*, 11:2, June 1994, 120). For 1960s iconography see Mellor, 'Foreword', passim and Richard S. Field, 'Contemporary Trends', passim. Allen Jones, one of the star printmakers of the later 1960s, set himself in opposition to craft skill, recollecting of his time at the RCA in 1959 – 60 that 'Printmaking seemed hidebound by a kind of snobbery based on appreciation of technique. I always felt that the best prints were made by the best artists. Chagall was famously supposed to have created his etchings for

Erskine's prioritisation of craft was also apparent in his catholic approach to style: 'We have not attempted to follow any particular artistic creed', he wrote in introducing his second annual survey exhibition in 1958, 'for in the graphic arts much depends on the quality of the printed image and the exploitation of the potentialities of printmaking'.<sup>558</sup> Later he claimed that his training as an archaeologist made him appreciate an object that he did not initially understand, 'as long as it had some kind of impact and craft skill' (what he would not put up with was 'people who couldn't be bothered to learn the media').<sup>559</sup> Like the sisters of Miller's Press, Erskine was ambitious to recruit artists with a wider reputation and set out his aim to offer publications that would 'cover the contemporary scene in British art'.<sup>560</sup> His focus on a creative engagement with the printmaking process meant, however, that the artists published by the gallery tended to be those already active in the post-war printmaking field (perhaps in addition to other activities) and who pursued established themes. His first British group exhibition, for example, *Colour Lithographs and Etchings by Contemporary British Masters*, in August 1956, included Spanish genre scenes by Michael Ayrton, foliate heads by John Piper, and boldly executed, semi-rural landscapes by Michael Rothenstein.<sup>561</sup> All three artists were alumni of the Society of London Painter-Printers and the RCA's *Coronation* series. The remaining two artists in this 1956 show were S.W. Hayter, whose impact on British printmaking from France was well-known, and the younger Anthony

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the Bible after having been introduced to the medium only a short time before' (Allen Jones, 'Recollections', *Print Quarterly*, 21:1, March 2004, 41).

<sup>558</sup> *Contemporary British Printmakers*, exhibition catalogue, St George's Gallery, 1<sup>st</sup> July – 30<sup>th</sup> August 1958, 1.

<sup>559</sup> Quoted in Sidey, *Editions Alecto*, 11.

<sup>560</sup> Erskine, 'Introduction', 1956, unpaginated.

<sup>561</sup> Despite the show's title, Rothenstein's works were linocuts.

Harrison, whose heavily outlined and simplified boats ashore suggested an accomplished (but late) neo-romanticism (Figure 60). These artists, and others with a similar pedigree in post-war printmaking, remained at the core of the gallery's output: Ayrton and Rothenstein both produced print suites, as did others who had, for example, participated in the *RCA Coronation Lithographs*, such as Anthony Gross, Ceri Richards and Julian Trevelyan.

Later survey exhibitions did, however, expand the circle of participants, bringing in a new generation of artists who were building wider reputations (such as Sandra Blow or Elizabeth Blackadder) and those responding to Continental and American abstraction (Blow, Frank Avray Wilson). Erskine also seems to have had a genuine desire to develop young artists as printmakers, introducing a student section to the *Graven Image* exhibitions from 1961 (leading to the inclusion of early works by David Hockney such as *Kaisarion and all his Beauty* in 1962, Figure 61).<sup>562</sup> However, there was no radical shift in the content of mainstream St George's Gallery Print productions and later suites included Brian Perrin's *North Welsh Landscape* and Richard Beer's *Etchings of Rome* (Figure 62).<sup>563</sup>

Another artist with strong, pre-existing printmaking credentials recruited by Erskine was Edwin La Dell, who had been promoted to Head of the School of Engraving at the RCA (which covered all print media) in 1955. La Dell's suite *The Oxford and Cambridge Eight* was published in 1959 but he also worked with Erskine on a set of twenty-seven lithographs by RCA staff and students published in 1960 as *Wapping to Windsor*; each print inspired in

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<sup>562</sup> Given the title *Caesarion* in the 1962 catalogue and *Cleopatra* when illustrated in G.S. Whittet, 'The St George's Gallery', 191.

<sup>563</sup> More of a departure were John Watson's Dubuffet-inflected pictures, *The Point-to-Point Lithographs*.

some way by the Thames (Figure 63). The series was an explicit successor to the *Coronation Lithographs* – a link made in the catalogue – but this time backed by Erskine as a commercial publishing partner.<sup>564</sup> It was also unusual among St George's Gallery Prints' publications in being machine printed via an offset press, an approach which helped reduce the sale price for each print to £3/10/0d or, as Erskine's catalogue note stated, 'half the price of offset's more antique and laborious sister-media'.<sup>565</sup> As such, *Wapping to Windsor* raises the question of Erskine's stance towards the ideal of printmaking as a means to democratise art ownership and also towards the rhetoric of 'Poor Man's Pictures' prevalent in print retailing, two related aspects of the field bequeathed by the preceding decade (and discussed in *Chapter One*).

The 'Introduction' to the first *The Graven Image* exhibition in 1959 – one of Erskine's more developed statements – suggests that the democratising potential of prints was important to him as an independent objective, not just as a means to access a wider market (though the benefit is seen to accrue to art as much as to the public). He castigates national art collections that are 'pervaded with the stuffy incenses of wealth and the awesome religion of the Precious' and diagnoses a 'failure of interest among the public' in visual art as the result of 'the relative costs of ownership of works of art on the one hand, and of books, gramophone records and theatre tickets on the other' (language echoing that

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<sup>564</sup> *Wapping to Windsor*, exhibition catalogue, St George's Gallery Prints, 2<sup>nd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> July 1960. Printing was at the RCA (the catalogue states by George Devenish, though Sidey states it was by his assistant Roy Crossett, ('The Devenish Brothers', 376)). Participating artists included Edward Ardizzone, Edward Bawden, Mary Fedden, Alistair Grant, Leonard Rosoman, Julian Trevelyan and Carel Weight, as well as La Dell, while among the students was Allen Jones.

<sup>565</sup> *Wapping to Windsor*, exhibition catalogue, unpaginated.

of the AIA's *Everyman Prints* brochure in 1940); he concludes that 'ownership, or the potentiality of it, is the greatest stimulus to interest that there is, and for that reason the visual arts have been badly served in recent years'.<sup>566</sup> More prosaically, he asserted elsewhere the hope that his own publications would reach the 'Mums and Dads of Pinner and Wigan' and frequently adopted a positive language of affordable opportunity when promoting the gallery.<sup>567</sup> Publicising a St George's Gallery Prints exhibition at the Edinburgh Festival in 1958, for example, he described prints as 'the democratic media of art', available for comparatively small sums, while the following year he took an exhibition to Nottingham under the heading of *Art for All* (the actual pricing of prints and the gallery's main Mayfair location indicate that, despite talk of 'art for all', the intended audience centred on a widened middle class, but, as discussed in *Chapter One*, this was a feature of the wider democratising movement and did not vitiate its political intentions).<sup>568</sup> In 1962, Robert Wraight placed Erskine as the leader of those with the slogan "'An original print in every home"'.<sup>569</sup>

Such comments justify Margaret Garlake's claim that 'Way back in the 50s when Robert Erskine founded the St George's Gallery, one of his intentions was that anyone who

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<sup>566</sup> Erskine, 'Introduction', *The Graven Image*, 7 – 8. In the catalogue for an early show, Erskine had celebrated the converse situation, the perceived popular patronage of art through prints in historical Japan (*Japanese Actor Prints*, exhibition catalogue, St George's Gallery Prints, 13<sup>th</sup> September to 18<sup>th</sup> October 1955, unpaginated).

<sup>567</sup> Pat Gilmour, *Artists at Curwen*, 95. Gilmour does not give a source for the quotation.

<sup>568</sup> 'Contemporary Prints on Show at Edinburgh', the *Financial Times* 20 Aug 1958, 13; *Art for All: Colour Lithos, Etchings, Wood & Linocuts and Silk Screen Prints from the St. George's Gallery, London*, exhibition catalogue, The Midland Group of Artists (Nottingham), 2<sup>nd</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> January 1959 (the title was the same as for the Zwemmer's exhibition at the same location the year before, see *Chapter One*).

<sup>569</sup> Wraight, 'The Quiet Revolution', 440.

wished could be a patron of contemporary art'.<sup>570</sup> However, Erskine's response to the inherited ideal of democratisation was more complex. Within *The Graven Image* catalogue, he emphasised how cheapness was a 'fortunate yet fortuitous aspect of printmaking', not its primary justification; to cite 'a need for cheaper pictures' was to reduce prints to a 'tenuously justified answer to economic laws'.<sup>571</sup> Later, he forcibly asserted that an artist must select a print medium for its inherent aesthetic qualities, 'using the chosen medium for its own sake, and not merely as a means of recapitulation to gain a wider and more plebeian market'.<sup>572</sup> This reads as a rebuke to advocates of lithography as, first and foremost, a democratising medium and his own approach to publishing *Wapping to Windsor* similarly suggests caution towards lithography's potential for mechanised reproduction and consequent low prices. La Dell seems likely to have been the instigator of a drive for lower pricing in the production of the series, still pursuing his long-term agenda into the 1960s. Erskine showed himself happy to accommodate this and to promote the virtues of affordability in his catalogue introduction (though, despite hints of future plans, machine-printed lithographs were not an experiment he repeated) but he also felt the need to stress how the characteristics of offset lithography had been in the minds of participating artists from the start, thus avoiding any compromise in aesthetic quality he feared might otherwise arise from the production method. Moreover, he ensured that the prints' particular status was marked on them, by replacing the usual pencil autograph with a signature printed from the plate and by excluding an edition number (though the edition size was restricted to

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<sup>570</sup> Margaret Garlake, 'Salerooms', 36; a similar claim was at the core of a presentation by Natalia Nash and Alexandra Tommasini, 'The Graven Image (1959): Printmaking in Britain on the Threshold of the New' at *Exhibiting Contemporary Art in Post-War Britain, 1945-60*, Tate Britain, 28<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> January 2016.

<sup>571</sup> Robert Erskine, 'Introduction', 7.

<sup>572</sup> Robert Erskine, 'St George's Gallery Prints', 21.

seventy impressions of each image).<sup>573</sup> He did not, it seems, want the lower prices of *Wapping to Windsor* to undermine those of its usual, hand-pulled works.

On occasion, Erskine complained that prints were too cheap to engage the traditional picture-buyer ('Mr. Robert Erskine ... still finds that the genuinely low prices of original artists' prints ... stand in the way of their being appreciated as they should') and some of his actions even seem designed to inflate prices, by insisting on high production standards but also by stoking prints' potential as a speculative financial asset.<sup>574</sup> The catalogue for Gross's *Le Boulevé Suite* lured potential buyers with a reminder that many of his earlier works 'are now expensive collector's items' while, following the gallery's closure, he offered advice on buying prints as an investment in the *Daily Mail*.<sup>575</sup> The close association of prints and cheap art was not, however, one sloughed off easily, whatever the sales pitch or price. As St George's Gallery Prints developed, reviewers could appear stuck in a discourse which framed its products, and those of other print initiatives, almost exclusively in terms of price, still reaching for the language of art for 'small purses'.<sup>576</sup> Continuing previous usage this might be meant as approbation or criticism. On the one hand, reviewing the first *The Graven Image* exhibition, the *Burlington Magazine* opened with the cliché that 'The Print is the poor man's picture' but went on to insist that 'cheapness does not imply

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<sup>573</sup> The catalogue put this restriction down to the RCA needing the plates for other work, a somewhat unconvincing rationale given the initial run could have been higher. The norm for a St George's suite was an editions of fifty, across media (see, for example, Michael Ayrton's, *Greek Suite*, Anthony Harrison's *Formentara Suite*, Julian Trevelyan's, *The Malta Suite* or La Dell's *Oxford and Cambridge Eight*) but larger editions were not unknown, Peter Peri's *Pilgrims Progress Suite*, for example, was in an edition of 75.

<sup>574</sup> Leslie Adrian, 'Pictures for the Poor', the *Spectator*, 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1959, 16.

<sup>575</sup> *Anthony Gross: 8 etchings*, exhibition catalogue, unpaginated; Shirley Conran, 'And for any wall: my Four Best Bets', *Daily Mail*, 6 Jan 1964, 8.

<sup>576</sup> For continued use of this phrase see, for example the review of the New Editions Group's 1960 show in the *Observer*, 16 July 1961, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 992/8/7.



poor quality', while in the same year the *Spectator's* article 'Pictures for the Poor' (with which Erskine seems to have co-operated) acknowledged that a print was not 'unique' but asserted that it expressed the artist's intentions 'no less truly than his paintings'.<sup>577</sup> On the other hand, low price and low status remained firmly connected for some commentators, cost brought into consideration even where the putative objection was aesthetic. Terence Mullaly, writing in the *Daily Telegraph*, was blunt in his assessment of the New Editions Group show in 1959, for example: while it reminded 'us how successful and, at the same time, how cheap modern prints can be', no-one 'should regard them as a substitute for oils and watercolours'.<sup>578</sup>

In a retrospective assessment of St George's Gallery Prints published in 1972, Erskine reflected on the print price inflation that had accelerated in the decade after his own gallery's closure.<sup>579</sup> He lamented the loss of the comparatively low prices but recognised that his own insistence on production quality and, in particular, his efforts to drive demand through professional promotion had helped to initiate change: 'Three guineas a print seems a long way off, beside Paolozzis and Jim Dines at ten times that amount, but I suppose that's what I was aiming to bring about'.<sup>580</sup> His 'suppose' here, however, suggests an unreconciled ambivalence in his attitude towards print prices. He seems never to have completely

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<sup>577</sup> Dennis Farr, 'Current and Forthcoming exhibitions', the *Burlington Magazine*, 101: 674, May 1959, 200 (Farr's line on Erskine's 1958 survey exhibition was more half-hearted, recommending it solely to 'bargain-hunters', 'Current and Forthcoming exhibitions', the *Burlington Magazine*, 100:665, August 1958, 295); Adrian, 'Pictures for the Poor', 16.

<sup>578</sup> Terence Mullaly, 'Prints by 5 Master', the *Daily Telegraph*, 30<sup>th</sup> July 1959, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 992/8/6.

<sup>579</sup> Robert Erskine, 'St George's Gallery Prints', 20 and 23. Prices for contemporary British works seem to have risen about two fold in the decade to 1963 (see Appendix 2) and a further fourfold in the following decade.

<sup>580</sup> Robert Erskine, 'St George's Gallery Prints', 23. Note also that Benedict Nightingale's assertion in *New Society* that St George's Gallery Prints initiated the print boom, referenced earlier, was not a compliment: it referenced the gallery's role in increasing prices, the latter viewed negatively.

abandoned the inherited tradition of prints as a means to art's (relative) democratisation, though with a caveat that prioritised aesthetic quality, as he perceived it, and without La Dell's long-term enthusiasm. His acquiescence with the ubiquitous rhetoric of 'pictures for the poor' reflected this commitment, as well as commercial realities, though he could also push back when he felt it was a barrier to acceptance in the mainstream market. Erskine's energising impact on the printmaking field notwithstanding, a weakened but still operative concept of art democratisation and a thin critical discourse focussed on price were a part of both his inheritance and his legacy.

In the same memoir of St George's Gallery Prints, Erskine made passing reference to a difficult financial situation and the way this had failed to improve: 'the gallery's status burgeoned, even if its financial viability stayed where it was'.<sup>581</sup> Looking more widely, contemporary commentary suggests a slight but fragile strengthening of the market for contemporary British prints, within fine-art retailing, as the 1950s progressed. A rash of sober assessments had marked the middle of the decade, prompted by an Arts Council exhibition of Picasso's prints and the first New Editions Group show, both in 1956. The earlier optimism about a print renaissance that had accompanied the emergence of colour lithography seems to have waned, with critics making a broader and deeper assessment of the field. Neville Wallis, for example, a sympathetic commentator, noted how contemporary British prints were 'nothing like so widely known and respected here as French prints are in France' and put this down to a lack of commercial galleries and craft printers but also to

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<sup>581</sup>Robert Erskine, 'St George's Gallery Prints, 22.

what he saw as ‘the poverty of our artists’ images’.<sup>582</sup> Just a year later, however, Wallis was more hopeful, talking of a printmaking ‘revival’ in his review of Erskine’s first annual survey show.<sup>583</sup> Again, this was partially down to his aesthetic judgement (‘Tension is less obviously relaxed when the serious painter turns to the [lithographic] stone’) but also the perception of an increasing demand (‘more people are discovering ... lithographs, aquatints, and other prints by our leading artists’) as well as the improved production and retailing effort represented by St George’s. Nonetheless, Wallis remained cautious; much of the new audience was seen to lie in America, while British prints still deserved ‘far greater recognition at home’. Two years later, Erskine’s annual review showed new confidence, moving out of the confined space of Cork Street to the Whitechapel Art Gallery, with the support of its director Bryan Robertson, for the first *The Graven Image* exhibition. Yet overall the scale of the gallery’s operations remained small, in contrast to the rapid expansion in staffing and turnover seen subsequently at Editions Alecto.<sup>584</sup> This may partly reflect a desire for private control on Erskine’s part, but the market was also unlikely to have supported such expansion. The talk of ‘revival’ and ‘revolution’ quoted earlier was overstated, though some saw signs of further change. Looking forward to the 1962 iteration of *The Graven Image*, *Studio* suggested that ‘This year it seems as if the breakthrough for which Erskine has worked so hard is about to be achieved’.<sup>585</sup> In the event, however, any such breakthrough was not to involve St George’s Gallery Prints with this proving to be its penultimate exhibition.

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<sup>582</sup> Neville Wallis, ‘At the Galleries: Prints’, the *Observer*, 15 July, 1956, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 992/8/5.

<sup>583</sup> Neville Wallis, ‘In Praise of Prints’, the *Observer*, 21 July, 1957, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 992/8/5.

<sup>584</sup> This point is made by Tessa Sidey, *Editions Alecto*, 13. The series of large, annual *Graven Image* exhibitions seem to have partially displaced St George’s other activity, including publishing new suites (see Appendix 8).

<sup>585</sup> Whittet, ‘The Newer London Galleries: The St George’s Gallery’, the *Studio*, 163:829, May 1962, 193.

Following its opening in 1954, St George's Gallery Prints changed expectations about production quality and helped diversify the print media that an artist might hope to sell. However, it would mischaracterise the gallery to see its operations – and the attitudes to prints that these reflected and encouraged – as either a clean break with the past or as prefiguring the printmaking field after its closure in 1963. Rather, there was a degree of continuity with earlier concerns, notably in the engagement with ideas of democratisation, as well as distinctiveness from both antecedents and successors, for example in the stress on craft practice. In the rest of the chapter, I turn to examples of the print images published by the gallery, starting with Merlyn Evans' *Vertical Suite in Black*. In line with the themes of this opening section, I propose that Evans' images for the gallery engaged with an established issue, opening a critical dialogue with the modernist idea of 'primitivism'. Evans' suite was thus positioned within the central tradition of modern art, matching Erskine's own ambitions for printmaking. Nevertheless, Evans also recognised – I will suggest – that prints retained a particular status, linked to their reputation as a popular form, and he utilised Erskine's support for a revived print medium in order to complicate this.

### **The 'civilizations behind the work': Merlyn Evans' *Vertical Suite in Black***

In February 1958, the cramped space of St George's Gallery Prints was adorned with a number of 'redoubtable specimens' of 'primitive' African carving (to quote the

contemporary language of *Art News*).<sup>586</sup> The occasion for this display was a month-long exhibition of the gallery's latest publication, *Vertical Suite in Black*, a set of six sugar-lift aquatints by Merlyn Evans (Figures 64 to 68).<sup>587</sup> The prints were well received, with critics valuing the impact of their size and rich monochrome, as well as the way that Evans' had used the medium, in particular its ability to replicate brushstrokes, to bring a granular quality of tone that varied their otherwise even blackness.<sup>588</sup> Bryan Robertson was later to describe the suite as 'magnificent' and in 1960 all six prints were displayed by the British Council at the Venice Biennale.<sup>589</sup> The African carvings that accompanied the prints' launch were also the subject of positive comment, with the 'fierce energy' of these works' seen to set a high bar for Evans' own productions.<sup>590</sup> A short artist's statement in the exhibition catalogue offered an explanation for their presence. Evans set out how he 'began *Vertical Suite in Black*, in homage to African carving, from which these designs derive' and then listed an explicit source for each of the images: '*Standing Figure* has the stiff, hieratic, abrupt

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<sup>586</sup> John Russell, 'Art News from London', *Art News*, March 1958, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 896/4/2. The terms primitive and primitivism, and the appropriate use of scare quotes, has been widely discussed. Outside quotations, I adopt the following practice: *primitivism* (i.e. the set of ideas and artistic practices developed in Europe and the US) is left unmarked; *primitive* is placed in scare quotes where it refers (usually adjectivally) to objects from non-Western cultures, but not where it refers to the concept of the primitive (usually as a noun) as used by primitivists (e.g. 'the approach to the primitive found in Hulme'). For the origins and definition of primitivism see, inter alia, Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush, 'Introduction', Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush (eds), *Prehistories of the Future: The Primitivist Project and the Culture of Modernism*, Stamford: Stanford University Press, 1995, 1 – 22; Daniel Miller, 'Primitive art and the necessity of primitivism to art', Susan Hiller, (ed.), *The Myth of Primitivism*, 50 – 71; Mark Antliff and Patricia Leighton, 'Primitive', Robert Nelson and Richard Shiff (eds), *Critical Terms for Art History*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, 170-84.

<sup>587</sup> Merlyn Evans – *Vertical Suite in Black*, exhibition catalogue, St George's Gallery Prints, 5<sup>th</sup> February – 5<sup>th</sup> March 1958, unpaginated. The six prints are dated between March and October 1957.

<sup>588</sup> For comment on size see Quentin Crewe, 'Sweet Prints', February 1958 (the publication is unclear but Crewe was writing for the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *Evening Standard*); as an example *Thunderbird* is 74 cm x 55 cm, the size of the six images varying slightly. For production quality and colour see The *Listener*, 6 March 1958 and Russell, 'Art News'. For tone see 'Three London Art Exhibitions', the *Times*, 13 February 1958. All references in this note are to Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 896/4/2.

<sup>589</sup> Robertson, 'Preface and a Profile', 5; *Pasmore: Paolozzi: Clarke, Cliffe and Evans/XXX Biennale Venice 1960 British Pavilion*, exhibition catalogue, the British Pavilion (British Council), Venice Biennale, 1960. Cliffe's prints shown in Venice were also a St George's Gallery Prints publication: *The Metamorphoses Suite*, 1959.

<sup>590</sup> Dennis Farr, 'Current and Forthcoming Exhibitions', the *Burlington Magazine*, 100:660, March 1958, 107.

angularity of sculpture by the Dogon tribe in the French Sudan', for example.<sup>591</sup> Reviewing the show in *Arts News and Review*, James Burr registered the impressive artistic pedigree for such a move, observing that African carving had stimulated the school of Paris, but by emphasising that this had been in 'the opening decades of the century' he also, implicitly, opened the possibility that by 1958 such a point of reference might seem hackneyed or even problematic.<sup>592</sup> Burr did not press this point however, instead referring to the continuing 'magical power' of African work and asserting that the 'spell it casts is still potent'.

In attending to *Vertical Suite in Black* here, my main concern is to develop the issue that Burr raised but then dropped. What did it mean for Evans to invoke African (and Oceanic) precedents at the end of the 1950s, not only more than fifty years after the first modernist turn towards primitivism but also just as Europe's colonial presence in these territories was entering full-scale retreat?<sup>593</sup> Did any significance attach to doing so through prints? I argue that the primitivist aspect of *Vertical Suite* can be understood as an expression of Evans' idiosyncratic commitment to modernist tradition. In this, the suite illustrates the connection to existing issues identified as a characteristic of Erskine's publications. Indeed it looked back beyond the radicalism of the 1930s (underpinning ideals of art democratisation) to offer a visual engagement with the origins of primitivist art in

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<sup>591</sup> Merlyn Evans, 'The Prints', *Merlyn Evans – Vertical Suite*, exhibition catalogue, unpaginated

<sup>592</sup> James Burr, 'The Black Image', *Arts News and Review*, 15 Feb 1958, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 896/4/2.

<sup>593</sup> Susan Hiller notes that 'the main body of [primitivist] work was produced within a specific timespan – the period roughly from 1880 to 1930', placing *Vertical Suite* well outside her top range ('Introduction', Susan Hiller (ed.), *The Myth of Primitivism: Perspectives on Art*, London and New York: Routledge, 1991, 12) while Colin Rhodes describes how decolonisation unsettled its practices (*Primitivism and Modern Art*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1994, 195-202). Evans himself described 'the strange fascination that African "idols" have maintained over Europeans for more than a century' (my emphasis) in an unpublished (and undated) note, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 861/1/7/39.

turn-of-the-century Paris and Vorticism's early manifestation of modernism in Britain, as I will discuss. At the same time, however, Evans' specific approach to primitivist iconography in the suite also suggested as a relevant context the British governments' rhetoric of colonial reform immediately after 1945, the kind of sympathetic engagement with post-war agendas that I have traced in earlier prints, though here transferred to questions of Empire. In responding to the history of primitivism, Evans shared concerns with his younger contemporaries, notably Eduardo Paolozzi whose work continued to address the issue over the following decades. In concluding this section, I suggest that comparison with Paolozzi clarifies what was distinctive in *Vertical Suite*. Evans' imaginative transcription of culturally remote objects was in a visual mode that would shortly seem outdated – when set against Paolozzi's collage aesthetic – as the right to such reimagining was put in question by the imperial dissolution of the early 1960s. Yet, the St George's Gallery Prints' series also offered a complex response to the history of primitivism which it invoked and in doing so expressed the tension between an investigative, ethnographic gaze towards 'primitive' objects, on the one hand, and the insistence that these embodied a metaphysics of unutterable mystery, on the other. Exploring this tension suggests a critical perspective on Paolozzi's collage aesthetic and his later rendering of the 'primitive' as a 'magic kingdom'.

Russell's piece for *Art News*, quoted above, described Evans as 'one of our most under-rated artists'.<sup>594</sup> Similar comment marked much of his working life, creating the

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<sup>594</sup> There is a limited literature on Evans with the most substantive work a (somewhat acritical) monograph by Mel Gooding (*Merlyn Evans*, Moffat, Dumfriesshire: Cameron and Hollis, 2010) which includes a bibliography.

reputation of an artist removed from the mainstream but appreciated by the perceptive. After a solo-show at the Leicester Galleries in 1953, Bryan Robertson wrote to him without restraint: 'The opening of your magnificent exhibition this afternoon marked your final and complete emergence as a great artist. That is to say, to be reckoned with only in the company of those great and wonderful men of our century: Picasso, Braque, Brancusi, Matisse, Moore and Léger'.<sup>595</sup> Three years later (and less than two years before the publication of *Vertical Suite*) Robertson hosted a major retrospective of Evans' work at the Whitechapel Art Gallery.<sup>596</sup> The artist was forty-six at this time and the career reviewed had been fragmented in its contexts. Twenty years earlier, in 1936, he had been invited by Herbert Read and Roger Penrose to show work at the *London International Surrealist Exhibition*, with the result that he experienced at first hand the exhibition's interpolation of ethnographic objects, and that he became attached to the London surrealists' loose organising network.<sup>597</sup> However, Evans reacted against the group's Soviet orientation and gravitated away.<sup>598</sup> With his career in Britain stalled, he took up a teaching post in South

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<sup>595</sup> Bryan Robertson to Merlyn Evans, 15 May 1953, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 896/1/1/1; emphasis in the original. Robertson remained close to Evans, later describing his as 'one of the real mentors of my adult life' ('Introduction', *45 – 99: a personal view of British painting and sculpture by Bryan Robertson*, exhibition catalogue, 13<sup>th</sup> November 1999 – 01<sup>st</sup> January 2000, Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, 6).

<sup>596</sup> The exhibition received largely respectful coverage, with critics focussed on Evans' linear style and apparent moral purpose; a more negative note was struck by Andrew Forge in the *Listener*, while Mervyn Levy, in *Arts News and Review*, was hyperbolic: 'the dramatic intensity of Evans' work is unparalleled in the history of European painting; and if the mood has been frequently one of menace and disquiet, that is only to be expected of an intellect, sensitive as an exposed nerve, which has endured the hells to which the soul of western man has been subjected in modern times' (cuttings are held in the Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 896/4/2). Evans wrote two biographical texts for the retrospective: the shorter published in the catalogue (*Merlyn Evans: Paintings, Drawings and Etchings*, exhibition catalogue, Whitechapel Art Gallery, October – November 1956, 6–7), the longer published posthumously (Merlyn Evans, 'Background', *The Political Paintings of Merlyn Evans, 1930-1950*, exhibition catalogue, Tate, March – June 1985, 20 – 28).

<sup>597</sup> Evans showed seven works in 1936 and subsequently contributed to *Surrealist Poems and Objects* at the London Gallery in 1937. Prior to this, he had graduated from the Glasgow School of Art in 1931, then used a travelling scholarship to visit the Continent making various modernist contacts, including S.W. Hayter.

<sup>598</sup> Evans wrote later that he 'refused to be implicated politically' 'Background', 23.



Africa, in 1938, where he wrote challenging racism in official pronouncements on South African art, and received a one-person show in Durban the following year.<sup>599</sup> His subsequent war service was active and dangerous, but on returning to England after demobilisation he was soon involved with the London Group, moving to a first solo show in London at the Leicester Galleries in 1949.<sup>600</sup>

Despite these changes of location and fortune, there were significant continuities in Evans' style and his images would often re-examine and recapitulate earlier motifs. The prints of *Vertical Suite*, for example, shared features with the tempera and oil painting *The Conquest of Time* (1934), a picture which had been cited as an exemplar surrealist image before the war (Figure 69).<sup>601</sup> The crowning projections of the object in the painting echo *Helmet Mask* and *Standing Figure*, while the bird form reappears in *Thunderbird*.<sup>602</sup> Nonetheless, in the late 1930s, the self-contained entities of works such as *The Conquest of Time* had evolved, with greater stress on representational qualities and by being set into dramatic groups – though specific forms, such as threatening birds or projecting blades, continued to reappear.<sup>603</sup> Evans' resulting manner then provided a substructure for his

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<sup>599</sup> Gooding, *Merlyn Evans*, 52.

<sup>600</sup> Morris Kestelman, a longstanding friend of Evans, remarked: 'It should never be forgotten that Evans really saw the horrors of war while on active service' ('Merlyn Evans', *Art Monthly*, May 1985, 86, 17). For the 1949 show, the gallery was shared with work by Edward Bawden (*Recent Works by Edward Bawden: Imaginative Paintings by Merlyn Evans*, exhibition catalogue, Leicester Galleries, February 1949).

<sup>601</sup> *The Conquest of Time* was hung at the *London International Surrealist Exhibition* and reprinted in the *International Surrealist Bulletin No. 4* as well as Herbert Read's anthology, *Surrealism* (1936). Gooding notes the irony of surrealist enthusiasm for a work that Evans himself understood in terms of a timeless, Greek-inspired aesthetic (*Merlyn Evans*, 42 and 36).

<sup>602</sup> More generally – across painting and prints – complex, schematic forms abut the margins and are set against a blank background. Given Evans' reworking of earlier ideas, it is notable that he used 'vertical' in the titling of works across his career, starting with *Vertical Crustacean* in 1930 (illustrated in Gooding, *Merlyn Evans*, 17).

<sup>603</sup> This point is made by Gooding, *Merlyn Evans*, 69.

work through to the Whitechapel retrospective, though the degree of figuration might vary from upright grotesques to faceted bodies, as did the detail in the shallow backgrounds and the intensity of colour (Figures 70, 71 and 72).

There were similar strands of persistence in the concerns that motivated Evans' art. His autobiographical reminiscences describe an early interest in politics, interweaving his artistic development with an overview of international affairs and his experience of events such as the general strike.<sup>604</sup> However, it was with the international crises of the late 1930s that current events, and a horror at their violence, manifested overtly in his work, sometimes through titles (such as *Distressed Area* or *Torturing the Anarchist* from 1937-38), sometimes through subject matter (the Soviet invasion of Finland in *Tragic Group*, 1939-40, the Nazi-Soviet pact in *The Chess Players*, 1940).<sup>605</sup> More generally, Evans regarded his whole approach to style as an engaged, though not partisan, gesture, his hieratic abstraction functioning as an act of resistance to the chaotic consequences of political failure:

'Conventional painting of any kind seemed inappropriate in the world in which I lived' he stated, after a précis of the violence that had undermined interwar life.<sup>606</sup> While immediate events were less evident in Evans' work after the end of the 1940s, critics looking at the 1956 retrospective understood that a wider ethical engagement with the world was, nonetheless, at the heart of his continuing project, he was a 'moralist' who was obsessed by his 'compassion with the oppressed or the defeated' (though critics differed over how

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<sup>604</sup> Evans, 'Background', 21. He is not always a reliable historical guide, recounting an apocryphal story of the General Strike (Gooding, *Merlyn Evans*, 11) and muddling the chronology of Weimar hyper-inflation.

<sup>605</sup> *Torturing the Anarchist* is illustrated in Gooding, *Merlyn Evans*, 49. *Tragic Group* was initially exhibited at the Tate as *Victims of a Demolition in Finland* (Gooding, *Merlyn Evans*, 63).

<sup>606</sup> Evans, 'Background', 21.

effectively his forms conveyed the strength of his indignation).<sup>607</sup> Though Evans had been sympathetic to pacifism at the outbreak of the war, he was not a political radical, nor given to direct action or commitment; he seems to have seen violence as an inherent, if unbearable, element of the human condition that could manifest itself through politics.<sup>608</sup>

By the time of the Whitechapel retrospective, Evans' reputation as a leading British printmaker was secure, perhaps more so than as a painter. Robertson's otherwise measured preface for the catalogue described him as, without qualification, 'the outstanding engraver in this country', while he had been part of Erskine's roster of artists at St George's Gallery Prints from its foundation in 1954.<sup>609</sup> Evans had made etchings and engravings from the start of his career and, as Mel Gooding notes, 'habitually worked at painting and print-making in parallel and never regarded the latter as a secondary activity'.<sup>610</sup> In line with this practice, the prints that he initially sold through Erskine's gallery were in a highly-wrought, linear style that reflected his wider approach to image making at the time.<sup>611</sup> *Vertical Suite*,

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<sup>607</sup> John Russell, 'Ten Volumes, Boxed', Sunday Times, October 1956 and Eric Newton, 'Emotion and the Abstract', Manchester Guardian, 4 October 1956, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 896/4/2. Robertson later described him as 'a visual conscience of our time' ('Introduction', 45 – 99, exhibition catalogue, 6).

<sup>608</sup> In a work such as the *The Execution* (1945-46), depicting the killing of Mussolini, the roles of perpetrator and victim are notably ambiguous. Direct evidence for Evans' politics is limited. Gooding suggests (convincingly) that he was (after 1945, at least) a 'stoic individualist', holding 'an essentially conservative philosophy' leavened by deep human sympathy (*Merlyn Evans*, 110) and that this emerged as a politics that was 'socialistic, liberal and progressive' (ibid., 62). Evans' private thoughts in 1944 on centralisation and bureaucracy, however, suggest a lack of sympathy for British socialism in practice, even ahead of 1945, and he was critical of "'Scientific Humanism'" and 'the God of Progress' (Merlyn Evans to Morris Kestelman, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1944, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 896/1/1/1).

<sup>609</sup> Bryan Robertson, 'Preface', *Merlyn Evans: Paintings, Drawings and Etchings*, exhibition catalogue, Whitechapel Art Gallery, October – November 1956, 3; St George's Gallery Prints memorandum 17 October 1954, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 896/1/1/1. Erskine used Evans as the demonstrator for the aquatint process in his *Artist's Proof*. Evans also exhibited with the New Editions Group from its inception.

<sup>610</sup> Gooding, *Merlyn Evans*, 31 and 95.

<sup>611</sup> These included *The Patient*, *The Jail* and *The Bird*, all 1953 (St George's Gallery Prints memorandum, 17<sup>th</sup> October 1954, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 896/1/1/1). These works (with some changes to titles) are illustrated as plates 65 – 67 in *Merlyn Evans 1910 – 1973: A Retrospective Exhibition*, exhibition catalogue, the Mayor Gallery/ the Redfern Gallery, February – March 1988.

in contrast, marked a further evolution in Evans' style and one achieved through his printmaking. Though the suite rehearsed motifs from the 1930s, as has been noted, its images introduced a new, pared-down abstraction, that emphasised the dynamic between two-dimensional shape and negative space, but also combined this with textured surfaces of brushed and spattered black ink, the latter approach made possible by Evans' adoption of sugar-lift aquatint.<sup>612</sup> In the Whitechapel catalogue, Evans had described the qualities he appreciated in different print media, with engraving's precision being 'suited to clearly realized forms' while etching – including aquatint – lent itself 'to the expression of space and atmosphere'; in *Vertical Suite*, Evans seems to have experimented with sugar-lift as a means to combine linear discipline with such atmosphere.<sup>613</sup>

While the stylistic choices manifested in *Vertical Suite* can be related to Evans' developing technical practice, they also placed the prints in a distinctive relationship to the post-war printmaking field. The use of an intaglio medium and an assertively black and white palette marked the suite's distance from colour lithography (which still retained a dominant position among print media) and hence from lithography's continuing (though not exclusive) reputation as a popular format associated with a discourse of democratisation. Yet even as the suite drew this contrast, the prints' exceptional scale also emphasised that

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<sup>612</sup> While *Vertical Suites'* pared-down abstraction remained prominent in Evans' work until his death in 1973, the painterly approach to surface was, subsequently, largely eschewed. The sugar-lift aquatint technique is described in Appendix 1; Evans had studied it at the Atelier Lacourière in Paris in the months preceding work on *Vertical Suite* (Gooding, *Merlyn Evans*, 129). Although Evans was a capable printer, for *Vertical Suite*, he (presumably with Erskine) chose to use C.H. Welch; on Welch's retirement, Evans bought his 44 inch press, previously belonging to Frank Brangwyn, allowing him to edition large images but also asserting a claim to a position in intaglio printmaking history (Robert Erskine, 'Introduction', *The Graphic Work of Merlyn Evans: a retrospective exhibition*, exhibition catalogue, Victoria and Albert Museum, November 1972 – February 1973, unpaginated).

<sup>613</sup> Merlyn Evans, 'Notes by the Artist', *Merlyn Evans*, exhibition catalogue, 7.

this was not an attempt to revive the etching tradition of the 1920s boom with its small, detailed images. Overall, the suite's mode thus seemed designed to signify a self-conscious modernity and to signify a claim to artistic innovation and seriousness.

A similar set of connotations could be understood from the way that *Vertical Suite in Black* was associated with 'primitive' African carving at the St George's Gallery Prints' launch exhibition.<sup>614</sup> Robert Erskine, as has been seen, variously embraced the discourse of printmaking as a popular form and tried to reposition prints closer to the artistic mainstream. Evans' work represented an opportunity to pursue the latter course and it seems likely that the presentation in the gallery was developed jointly between himself and Evans.<sup>615</sup> Primitivism was recognised as a sign of artistic ambition and a way to lay 'claim to a mythic and philosophical content' for new Euro-American artworks.<sup>616</sup> Certainly reviewers saw the African pieces in the gallery as setting a challenge for Evans' productions in terms of aesthetic impact (as has been noted) and in the exhibition catalogue, Evans' own

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<sup>614</sup> The exhibition catalogue did not use the word 'primitive', Evans referring to 'African carving', and it is reasonable to assume that this was a deliberate choice. However, reviewers did use the term: for example Burr in *Arts News and Review* writes of 'primitive formal vigour' and Russell in the *Sunday Times* of 'themes from primitive African sculpture' (Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 896/4/2).

<sup>615</sup> Evans was familiar with surrealist exhibition practices and had a collection of relevant objects which (speculatively) he may have lent for the launch; Erskine controlled activities in the gallery and the approach fits his own sense of showmanship as well as his training in archaeology. Erskine later claimed Evans' interest in print media was strictly for their aesthetic possibilities and 'not merely as a means of recapitulation for a wider market' (Erskine, 'Introduction', unpaginated); there is limited evidence of Evans' own view, though in a 1970 essay he stated that many artists have 'wanted to reach a wider and larger public than could be reached by their paintings' via prints, implying some sympathy with this view (Merlyn Evans, 'The Printmaker and The Peintre Graveur', *Merlyn Evans 1910 – 1973*, the Mayor Gallery, reprinted from the *Magazine of the Printmakers Council*, No. 3).

<sup>616</sup> Jack Flam and Miriam Deutch, 'The Ascendance of Primitivism, 1941 – 1983', Jack Flam and Miriam Deutch (eds), *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art: A Documentary History*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003, 259 (the characterisation is applied to late 1940s America, but held for London a decade later).

statement was wholly given over to describing his ethnographic sources. This was not, in fact, the first time he had publicly flagged an interest in non-Western art. His autobiographical sketch for the Whitechapel retrospective had emphasised the formative influence he felt from the art of British Columbia (in western Canada) and from the South Pacific, cultures he experienced through collections of the British Museum. However, despite such emphasis on culturally remote objects in Evans' self-presentation, his work before *Vertical Suite* offered limited evidence of specific visual connections to any particular tradition.<sup>617</sup> While living in Africa he had completed *Polynesian Fantasy*, 1938 (Figure 73), whose sexualised, anthropomorphic, objects made broad reference to both Pacific and African carving (their imagined quality underlined by the title) and similar composites appeared elsewhere.<sup>618</sup> In this earlier work, non-Western objects had thus acted as an open resource for Evans' imaginative remaking, and as a signifier of modernist alignment. Indeed his description in the Whitechapel autobiography was self-deprecating, casting his earlier enthusiasm for indigenous objects as immature, focussed on 'shape entirely. ... At that time I was not really interested in the civilizations behind the work'.<sup>619</sup> *Vertical Suite* retained aspects of the earlier approach (the culturally remote objects again remade as hybrids in Evans' characteristic forms) but with a key difference in the deliberateness with which each print was, via the catalogue commentary, associated with a specific indigenous tradition. Evans' relative care here was underscored by the lack of reciprocal attention in the series'

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<sup>617</sup> Gooding, *Merlyn Evans*, 25, even suggests that Evans' experiments in sculpture from the early 1930s were notable for the absence of explicit reference to the 'archaic and tribal' models that were then preoccupying other young British sculptors such as Henry Moore.

<sup>618</sup> The claim for an African derivation for *Polynesian Fantasy* is made by Gooding, *Merlyn Evans*, 52. Other relevant works include *The Crucifixion* (1945), where a totem-like figure stands to the left (illustrated *ibid.*, 82), and *Vertical Figure No. 1* (1956), centring on a feathered, fetish-like object (*ibid.*, 124).

<sup>619</sup> Merlyn Evans, 'Notes by the Artist', 6.

reception: almost all critics referred to inspiration taken from ‘African’ or ‘Negro’ carving but none to the fact that the last of the prints, *Thunderbird*, was specifically associated with Melanesian sources.<sup>620</sup>

Evans saw his work as taking its place in the mainline tradition of European modernism and also saw himself as a historian and critic of that tradition – a role manifested in his reviews for *Art News and Review* in the early 1950s.<sup>621</sup> In this context, he also reflected on the development and influence of primitivism in twentieth-century art, drafting a developed (though unpublished) short essay on the subject.<sup>622</sup> As Evans sketches out, primitivism, as a set of ideas and practices, had deep roots but it was within the modernist milieu of early twentieth-century Paris that its transformative impact on art emerged, despite its concepts remaining ill-defined. Objects produced by alien cultures were seized upon as embodiments of a positive alternative to the European inheritance, the latter perceived as a combination of materialism and moral repression; these objects offered

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<sup>620</sup> ‘Thunderbird introduces a dynamic element of time and emergence more reminiscent of carvings from the Torres Straits and New Ireland, which makes them cousins several removes away from their more static associates in isolated silhouette’ (Merlyn Evans, ‘The Prints’, *Merlyn Evans – Vertical Suite*, exhibition catalogue, unpaginated). Some degree of cultural homogenisation of Evans’ part is implied by the use of a title referring to a creature from the myths of Canada’s Northwest Coast. Critical inattention was also facilitated by Evans’ own line in the catalogue about a ‘homage to African carving’.

<sup>621</sup> As evidence for Evans’ positioning of his work in this tradition note that he submitted early works to Alan Bowness’s exhibition *British Art and the Modern Movement* in 1962. Identified writings by Evans for *Art News and Review* are ‘Naturalism and the Quest for Realism’, 12<sup>th</sup> December 1953, 2; ‘Paintings from France’, 14<sup>th</sup> November 1953; and ‘Edward Burra’, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1955, 3. The second of these illustrates the centrality of the modernist tradition to his writing, for example posing the question of ‘just how the formative influence of cubism has made itself felt in the works of the younger artists’. His notebooks are also replete with summary histories of principle strands of modernism (for example his responses to British art, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 896/1/7/4) while Robertson later described him as ‘formidably erudite about modern art’ (‘Introduction’, 45 – 99, exhibition catalogue, Kettle’s Yard, Cambridge, 6).

<sup>622</sup> ‘Merlyn Evans notebook containing drafts of articles on Gauguin and primitivism and the attraction of African sculpture’, unpaginated, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 861/1/7/39. The notebook is undated; it shares interests with other writing from the 1950s and implies a cold war context, making that decade a plausible range for the date of its drafting.

powerful formal alternatives to the entire post-renaissance tradition of artistic representation, foregrounding the object and not its referent.<sup>623</sup> Evans' essay criticised aspects of primitivism (taking a sardonic view of the search for authenticity in the exotic associated with Gauguin) but also asserted its profound value. He credited Picasso and Epstein with bringing objects collected by ethnographers into aesthetic consideration and described how they, Brancusi, Modigliani and others, had been 'energised into a primitive form of expression' in their own work (though his analysis of this form was finally limited to observing that 'recognizable affinities between the work of artists of differing time[,] culture and place are ... subtle [and] difficult to identify'). He was also sympathetic to the idea that post-war Westerners (implicitly living in the shadow of the nuclear age) could find in the 'withdrawn formalism' of 'primitive' art a shared fear of 'uncontrollable forces leading to calamity'.

Evans' critical awareness of the already lengthy history of modernist primitivism thus formed one context for his own claims to affinities with African sculpture in *Vertical Suite in Black*. However, in the exhibition catalogue, he attributed the immediate origin of the suite to his friendship and conversation with two leading British authorities on the ethnography of African art, Margaret Webster Plass and William Fagg. It was their knowledge that, implicitly, broadened his earlier interest in culturally distant objects to include 'the civilizations behind the work'. For an anthropologist, and Deputy Keeper of

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<sup>623</sup> In investigating John Minton's work in *Chapter Two*, I reference Simon Faulkner's use of 'exoticism'. There is a close relationship between this and primitivism. The latter can, nonetheless, be differentiated from the former in (i) its interest in ethnographic knowledge (against a preference for the unexamined), (ii) its acknowledged foundation in museum objects; (iii) its orientation towards Africa and Oceania (against Jamaica or India) and (iv) its invoking of sub-Jungian ideas of a universal unconscious.



Ethnography at the British Museum, Fagg was unusually engaged with the contemporary visual arts.<sup>624</sup> He had lectured at the ICA in 1949 and again in 1951 (the latter occasion in the context of *Traditional Art from the Colonies*, a contribution to the Festival of Britain). In these lectures, he asserted that modern artists (and implicitly modernist artists) had misunderstood 'primitive' art while merely adopting its motifs, and invited his audience to engage creatively with non-Western models in a new way. In particular he argued that indigenous visual art traditions were not expressions of fear and pessimism, but rather of confidence, nor were they formal exercises practiced at a remove from their societies, but rather part of an integrated social practice, the carriers of shared meaning.<sup>625</sup> Through study of such traditions, modern artists might 'learn to ennoble their own disordered societies as primitive artists had done for thousands of years'.<sup>626</sup> While it is not possible to ascribe Fagg's views to Evans (and his essay on primitivism certainly endorsed the idea of 'primitive' objects as expressing fear) he will have been aware of them, and his insistence on specific sources for the images in *Vertical Suite* bears the imprint of both Plass' and Fagg's scholarship as well as a newly critical attitude to the idea of non-Western art as simply a set of formal resource to be mixed and matched.

Moreover, *Vertical Suite* as a whole offered both a homage to and a critique of earlier modernist practices in a way that was redolent of Fagg's assessment. The first print

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<sup>624</sup> Fagg's career and thinking is discussed in Garlake, *New Art, New World*, 53-56. He and Plass were later to co-author *African Sculpture*, London: Studio Vista, 1966.

<sup>625</sup> The idea that 'primitive' art expressed fear before the world was a commonplace, articulated by Picasso in 1907 (Colin Rhodes, *Primitivism*, 116), but particularly associated in Britain with T.E. Hulme's reading of Wilhelm Worringer (Tickner, *Modern Life*, 208); the idea of the 'primitive' as expressing pure form was introduced by Roger Fry (Tickner, *Modern Life*, 206 n.112) and had been influentially articulated by Moore (Henry Moore, 'Primitive Art' (1941) reprinted in Flam and Deutch (eds.) *Primitivism*, 267 – 71).

<sup>626</sup> Brenda Poole, 'Primitive and Modern Art', *Art News and Review*, 26 March 1949, 27.

in the series, *Helmet Mask*, suggested such an interpretation (Figure 64).<sup>627</sup> The West African mask and carved figure had been the two characteristic objects of avant-garde primitivism as it emerged in Paris, but it was the mask that became entangled in an origin myth. Maurice de Vlaminck's proprietary claim to have first alighted on a Fang mask in a bistro was disputed by others, while Picasso waxed and waned over the role of specific African models in the mask-like faces that characterised his 'Negro Period', including *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. Version O)* (1907).<sup>628</sup> As Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush note, the mask became the 'quintessential artifact [sic] of Western primitivism'.<sup>629</sup> It was thus predictable that in post-war Britain a design of an African mask – via Picasso – was used to promote the ICA's exhibition of 'the primitive and the modern', *40,000 Years of Modern Art* in late 1948, which included *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. Version O)* in its display.<sup>630</sup> By starting with *Helmet Mask, Vertical Suite* thus appeared to offer a reprise of this history and to nod to the African mask's status on the borders of cliché.

However, the print also established its own distance from earlier precedent, and hence that of the series that followed it too. Michael North has discussed the way Picasso understood the African mask and used it in *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. Version O)* and related work. The mask's appeal, he suggests, was its perceived ability to undo the opposition of culture and nature by combining formal order with the inexplicable and occult; while the cultural

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<sup>627</sup> The ordering of the suite was established by the catalogue and reflected the dates on the impressions.

<sup>628</sup> For Vlaminck see Jack Flam, 'Introduction', Flam and Deutch (eds.), *Primitivism*, 3 and Rhodes, *Primitivism*, 111; for Picasso see Michael North, 'Modernism's African Mask: The Stein Picasso Collaboration', Barkan and Bush (eds.), *Prehistories of the Future*, 270 – 289.

<sup>629</sup> Barkan and Bush, 'Introduction', 16.

<sup>630</sup> The cover for the *40,000 Years of Modern Art* catalogue is illustrated in Massey, *The Independent Group*, 26. Fagg acted as an adviser for the exhibition.

significance of the mask was insistent yet inscrutable, its very mysteriousness gave access to deep psychological truths normally hidden – paradoxically – by the face’s flesh.<sup>631</sup> Evans seems to have thought about the mask in broadly similar terms. In one of his notebooks he sketched out an essay entitled simply ‘Masks’ which celebrated their diverse forms and lamented their absence from his own culture; in surveying masks from ‘the strange and fascinating art of central Africa’, he stressed (as North suggests of Picasso) both the ‘formal sensibility’ of the mask and its ‘capacity for expression of emotion’ so that the face vibrates ‘with the force of an inner life’.<sup>632</sup> However, in *Helmet Mask*, Evans confronted the viewer with something strikingly distinct from earlier Parisian visual models. He substituted for Picasso’s simplified planes and asymmetry an assertively two-dimensional but also significantly more complex form, one that was harder both to decode and to understand in terms of expressive emotion – there are suggestions of a head in profile but also multiple horizontal layers and intricate internal decoration. A comparison with the Baga dance mask held in the British museum, which was referenced as the source in the *Vertical Suite* catalogue, helps resolve the picture’s referential workings and its close relationship to the model, even as this is reimagined (Figure 74).<sup>633</sup> The top half of the image represented the face of the mask, looking to the left, with the scimitar-like projection matching the mask’s decisive nose; Evans’ internal decoration was based on bands of scarification pattern carved on the wood. Moreover, consideration of the Baga original clarifies that this was not, in fact,

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<sup>631</sup> North, ‘Modernism’s African Mask, 279 and 283. North argues that this extended a contradiction imposed by European’s on the African face, which was similarly considered both too natural and too elusive.

<sup>632</sup> ‘Masks’ is in Merlyn Evans notebook containing reflections on John Berger; notes from Paris and responses to British art, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 896/1/7/4; this is undated and unpaginated.

<sup>633</sup> ‘Helmet Mask bears a strong resemblance to the great Baga dance mask representing a maternity goddess, recently acquired by the British Museum’, Merlyn Evans, ‘The Prints’, unpaginated.

a mask to be worn over the face in the mode of *Les Demoiselles*, but rather a fully modelled head that was perched on top of the dancer's own head and shoulders, hence a *helmet* as much as a *mask* (Figure 75). As the starting point for *Vertical Suite*, *Helmet Mask* thus both invoked a longstanding modernist engagement with the African mask and delivered a re-estrangement of it; it denied audience expectations of how the mask might be translated into modernist art and showed that the source material remained unassimilated and complex and that ethnographic scholarship could help elucidate its function.

Standing at the other end of *Vertical Suite* to *Helmet Mask* was *Thunderbird*, associated with carvings from the Oceanic areas of the Torres Straits and New Ireland (Figure 68). If African art's impact on Picasso and cubism was an established narrative by the mid-twentieth century, the story of surrealism's turn toward the art of Oceania was almost as well rehearsed, whether understood as reflecting kindred sympathies for the magical or as a petulant gesture towards the previous avant-garde.<sup>634</sup> D. H. Kahnweiler's history of 'Negro Art and Cubism', published in 1948, for example, noted how 'twenty years later, the Surrealists developed a passionate enthusiasm for Oceanic art', while Barnett Newman reflected on how the 'Oceanic artist and the Surrealist' had formed 'a fraternity under a common fatherhood of aesthetic purpose' in 1946.<sup>635</sup> By enacting this same turn through

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<sup>634</sup> For an assertion of a shared 'mystico-magical conception of life' see Christian Zevros, 'Oceanic Works of Art and Today's Problems', Barkan and Bush (eds.), *Prehistories of the Future*, 205 – 8 (first published 1929); for a sceptical take on the surrealist embrace of the primitive see Waldemar George, 'The Twilight of Idols', 212 – 18 (first published 1930). For the turn away from Africa see Rhodes, *Primitivism*, 170 and Flam, 'Introduction', 13.

<sup>635</sup> D. H. Kahnweiler, 'Negro Art and Cubism', Barkan and Bush (eds.), *Prehistories of the Future*, 284 (first published in 1948); Barnett Newman, 'Art of the South Seas', reprinted in the same volume, 279 (first published 1946).

*Thunderbird*, as the last print of the series, Evans thus further underscored *Vertical Suite's* carefully distanced reprise of the history of modernist primitivism.<sup>636</sup>

As with other aspects of modernism, primitivism's history in Britain had been part of a wider European story but with distinctive elements and emphases. In the period prior to the First World War, it had had limited visual impact on painting, being seen more obviously in the stylistic adoptions of sculptors, particularly immigrants such as Jacob Epstein and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska. Perhaps most profound, however, was its influence on the conceptual framework of artists and art-writers, in particular those associated with the indigenous avant-garde movement of Vorticism, based in the networks around Wyndham Lewis. In this context, the primitive was deemed to provide an alternative reference point to the allegedly exhausted tradition of post-renaissance humanism and to the naturalism taken as that tradition's visual correlate, and one that was more adequate to the modern context. It thus provided an external source to justify radical innovations in form. As Lisa Tickner has noted, the most influential argument for the congruity of the primitive and modern art was made by the philosopher-poet T.E. Hulme.<sup>637</sup> The connecting thread for Hulme was psychological: in both cases, he claimed, a desire for the abstract was the response of a culture faced with complexity and instability that reacted by asserting itself through

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<sup>636</sup> In the catalogue for *Vertical Suite*, the penultimate print, *Seed Pod*, was not associated with a specific ethnographic source in the same way as the other works (being described only as 'a heart shaped fertility symbol'); Mel Gooding, *Merlyn Evans*, 132, states that this work also has an Oceanic origin, but without providing further detail or reference.

<sup>637</sup> Tickner, *Modern Life*, 206-07; my assessment of primitivism in Britain in the early twentieth century owes much to Tickner's discussion, *Modern Life*, 206-10. For Hulme see also Harrison, *English Art and Modernism*, 94-100; Rebecca Beasley, "'A Definite Meaning": The Art Criticism of T.E. Hulme', Edward P. Comentale and Andrzej Gasiorek, *T. E. Hulme and the Question of Modernism*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006.

unchanging, authoritative, spiritual forms. In this context, the abstraction that Hulme valued in modern art was one of clean lines and geometry, like ‘the hard clean surface of a piston-rod’.<sup>638</sup> From the writings of Hulme and his associates around 1914, a set of primitivist ideas thus diffused into British avant-garde culture, or at least that faction associated with Lewis; ideas that stressed rupture with the past and the revival of spirituality, and that were also couched as the confrontation of a creative, masculine virility with a flaccid, feminised culture. Tickner discusses how Gaudier-Brzeska’s phallic *Hieratic Head of Ezra Pound* (1914), which was derived from an Easter Island statue in the British Museum, condensed all of these issues, but in particular asserted the last: that is the insistence of this strand of British primitivism on its own male potency.

Evans, who was born in 1910, was a generation younger than those involved in this first primitivist move among British artists but saw their ideas as live and relevant (a position aided by the posthumous publication of Hulme’s key writings in 1924). Indeed, in a letter to Morris Kestelman written from Italy in November 1944, Evans confessed that Hume was ‘a man for whom I have a somewhat immoderate admiration’ and much of his artistic output prior to *Vertical Suite* could be seen as embodying a Hulmean preference for the austere and for a ‘mechanical’ abstraction.<sup>639</sup> This was certainly the understanding of contemporaries, though the influence was ascribed to Lewis and Vorticism rather than directly to Hulme. Reference to Lewis was thus ubiquitous in reviews of the Whitechapel retrospective, with

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<sup>638</sup> Quoted in Tickner, *Modern Life*, 208. Hulme borrowed heavily from the contemporary German aesthetics of Wilhelm Worringer.

<sup>639</sup> Evans to Kestelman, 21 November 1944, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 896/1/1/1; The letter refers primarily to Hume’s political philosophy but it is reasonable to infer that Evans’ also admired his aesthetics; the letter is one of the most developed statements of Evans’ political and philosophical ideas in his archive.

Neville Wallis (as one example) using the comparison to open his piece in the *Observer*: ‘Like Mr. Wyndham Lewis, to whom he has owed much, Mr. Merlyn Evans is a naturally incisive linear artist’.<sup>640</sup> Nonetheless, Evans’ relationship with Vorticism was always more complex than such repeated reference implied. As a coherent movement, it had largely foundered by 1916, while Evans did not see work by Lewis at first-hand until 1937, when his style was already established.<sup>641</sup> Instead, his initial exposure to the Vorticist aesthetic was primarily through photographs of sculpture by Lawrence Atkinson, an artist who had been affiliated to the original Vorticist movement, but who continued to develop its aesthetic into the 1920s in the service of a distinct philosophy.<sup>642</sup> Evans, similarly, was attracted to elements of Vorticist style but deployed them in a way at odds with the movement’s initial positions as articulated by Lewis. Whilst the poise of works such as *The Conquest of Time* could be related to Lewis’s idea of creation from a point of stillness ‘at the heart of the whirlpool ... where all energy is concentrated’, Evans had little interest in celebrating the destructive spin of the vortex itself. Moreover, as his art and politics developed, he increasingly used the stylistic resources of Vorticism specifically in order to memorialise the pity of war, rather than to blast pacifists in the style of Lewis.<sup>643</sup>

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<sup>640</sup> Others to mention Lewis included Denys Sutton in the *Financial Times*, Eric Newton in the *Manchester Guardian* (‘Like Wyndham Lewis, his world is a harsh, armour-plated affair’) and John Russell in the *Sunday Times* (‘the genie of Wyndham Lewis has clearly peeped over his shoulder’). Two years earlier, R.H. Wilenski described Evans’ as a ‘neo-Vorticist’, a description with which he seems to have been comfortable given that Wilenski then wrote for the Whitechapel catalogue. R.H. Wilenski, ‘Contemporary English Painting: A Personal Survey’, *Sphere* 27<sup>th</sup> February 1954. (For all sources see Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 896/4/2).

<sup>641</sup> Mel Gooding, *Merlyn Evans*, 38.

<sup>642</sup> See Waddell, Nathan. ‘Lawrence Atkinson, Sculpture, and Vorticist Multimediality’, *Modernism/modernity*, 1:3, September 2016, <https://doi.org/10.26597/mod.0003>, accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2019.

<sup>643</sup> Lewis quoted in Harrison, *English Art*, 102.

Evans' long-term interest in 'primitive' objects might thus be seen as connected to his arms-length association with Vorticism, particularly his reading of Hulme, the one reinforcing the other. In this context, *Vertical Suite in Black* could then be understood as a mature manifestation of these stimuli and a straightforward recapitulation of ideas from an earlier moment in the history of British primitivism. However, aspects of the series' facture and its content also complicated its relationship to Hulmean notions. While a combination of monochrome angularity and parallel patterning characterised the first four, 'African', prints in particular, echoing Hulme's preference for a 'hard, clean surface', in their detail they offered something quite different. Evans appreciated his newly-acquired sugar-lift aquatint technique as essentially painterly. It allowed 'perfect freedom of handling with a brush' to achieve 'variety of texture and tonality' and *Vertical Suite* exploited this to the full.<sup>644</sup> Even *Standing Figure*, with its decisive areas of solid black, included fine, pencil-like lines in its projections along with areas of brushed texture and a frayed quality at the form's edge.<sup>645</sup> Other prints pushed these effects further, undermining the even surface and linear clarity: *Seed Pod* saw lines dissolve into bubbles; *Helmet Mask* and *Corn Ghost* included a patina of flicked, white blotches across the surface; while in *Helmet Mask* and *Skull*, virtually every defining edge of the form was eroded in its detail. If, within Vorticism, both a hard line and 'primitive' forms had been understood as male, Evans' subtle undermining of linearity was matched by an ambiguity in the gender identity of some of the hybrid forms he portrayed. The form in *Standing Figure*, for example, might on first consideration have been understood as a representation of male pride and violence, filling the space and pushing at

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<sup>644</sup> 'Merlyn Evans Notebook Expository notes on graphic techniques: engraving, etching and dry-point', Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 896/1/7/35, undated and unpaginated.

<sup>645</sup> Surface textures are somewhat reduced in photographic reproduction.



its edges with points and darts.<sup>646</sup> However, attention to Evans' stated inspiration, that is the 'stiff, hieratic, abrupt angularity' of the Dogon, suggested an alternative reading (see Figure 76). In a comparison with Dogon sculpture, the higher projections were revealed as, in fact, stylised breasts and the lower features wide hips over bent legs. There was a similar, if less aggressive, assertiveness to the form in *Helmet Mask*. Again, however, the African object from which it was derived complicates any assumptions about a male identity: the Baga dance mask actually represented an older woman as an idealization of female fertility (and here the curved lower projections match the sculptures breasts). As a further twist, the mask was worn in dance ceremonies by a man. Thus, while the Hulmean tradition can be seen as a further historical reference point invoked by *Vertical Suite*, along with allusions to Parisian and surrealist primitivism, as in those cases the series also marked its distance. Far from revivifying the elision of the primitive with an assertive masculinity, Evans' concern for the particularity and context of his 'primitive' objects led to subjects which were subtle and ambiguous in their gender reference. This he combined with a style that compromised linear clarity, while retaining a bold confidence of its own.

Primitivist discourse was not, of course, quiescent in Britain between the Vorticist moment of the 1910s and Evans' publication in 1958. Margaret Garlake has argued that the late 1940s, in particular, saw the idea of the primitive become 'a significant factor in the

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<sup>646</sup> This interpretation gains plausibility from earlier work, where Evans deployed overtly sexualised forms to express archetypal behaviour and in particular male violence, as in *Polynesian Fantasy* (though Evans also deployed female symbols of violence, such as the mantis-like forms in *Nocturnal Fantasy* (1949), reproduced in Gooding, *Merlyn Evans*, 86).

discourse of modernism to an extent that was unprecedented' in the country.<sup>647</sup> The impact of this post-war discourse on art production was indirect, with almost no straightforward stylistic adoptions; however, Garlake proposes that those looking for a new conception of what an art work might be found justification in ideas of the primitive, just as they had at the beginning of the century. New art institutions were eager to circulate such ideas, with the Institute for Contemporary Art (ICA) taking a prominent role.<sup>648</sup> Relevant lectures included those by Fagg, with other contributions from Herbert Read and Leon Underwood, while exhibitions included the ICA's *40,000 Years of Modern Art* (subtitled 'A Comparison of Primitive and Modern') and *Traditional Art of the British Colonies*, organised by Fagg for the Royal Anthropological Institute with the commercial gallery Zwemmer in 1949.<sup>649</sup> Garlake argues, moreover, that this activity involved a significant symbiosis between art organisations and a progressive strand within government. While the reality was compromised, some government figures were framing colonial policy as a complement to the welfare state at home, with mutual respect and a 'people's Empire' the setting for economic and political development, and this found an echo among those in the arts keen to promote culturally remote objects as the products of different but parallel high cultures; the ICA, in particular, was 'linked into a discourse of primitivism profoundly inflected by current politics'.<sup>650</sup> Thus, for example, Fagg's 1949 exhibition formed part of a wider set of

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<sup>647</sup> Garlake, *New Art, New World*, 51. Primitivist ideas had, to an extent, been pursued between the wars with, in particular, the Mexican influence on Henry Moore's work widely recognised.

<sup>648</sup> Garlake notes that 'For the early ICA, anthropology was as consuming an interest as psychoanalysis ... Most of the young artists involved in the development of a post-surrealist discourse of primitivism were closely connected with [it]' (*New Art, New World*, 52). She cites as examples of artists responding to primitivist ideas Eduardo Paolozzi, William Turnbull and William Scott (*New Art, New World*, 56-57).

<sup>649</sup> Garlake, *New Art, New World*, 53-54; Leon Underwood, 'Primitive Art', *Art News and Review*, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1949 3. *40,000 Years of Modern Art* mixed geographical and historical distance in constructing its idea of the primitive.

<sup>650</sup> Garlake, *New Art, New World*, 53. The phrase 'people's Empire' is taken from Webster, *Englishness and Empire*, 7. Post-1945 colonial policy was also shot through with self-interest, aimed at increasing the supply of

government-sponsored events under the title, *Colonial Exhibition 1949 – Focus on Colonial Progress*. This alignment of visual art and governmental politics was, however, short-lived. Not only did policy shift with the fall of the Labour government in 1951, but from the mid-1950s any notion of a ‘people’s Empire’ began to crumble under the unaffordability of imperial commitments and more urgent, sometimes violent, demands for independence.

The subject matter of *Vertical Suite* and the format of its exhibition at St George’s Gallery Prints in 1958 thus both evinced something of a return to the approaches of this earlier moment, a point underlined by the catalogue’s reference to Fagg who had been so prominent in the late 1940s. However, the political context had now changed, representing a moment of transition in Britain’s relationship with Africa and the empire more generally. Evans’ production came just after the surrender of colonial power in Ghana (the first European withdrawal from sub-Saharan Africa) and as the processes unwound that were to lead to Nigerian independence and Macmillan’s ‘winds of change’ speech – heralding wholesale decolonisation – both in 1960. Modernist primitivism had always contained the contradiction that its claimed affiliation with colonised cultures, and its positioning of them against European traditions, was enabled by its ability to access the objects of those cultures and mould their representation on its terms. As national independence began to imply indigenous cultural ownership, however, that tension began to make previous modes of

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raw materials to a weakened Britain, and implementation was inevitably complex: the government founded the Colonial Development Corporation in 1948 but achievements were mixed, with the Tanganyika Groundnut Scheme being a well-known failure; in South Asia there were more rapid moves toward decolonisation, culminating in the independence of India, Pakistan and Burma in 1949 (see Morgan, *The People’s Peace*, 44; Hennessy, *Never Again*, 221 – 224).

primitivism seem unsustainable, in Britain as elsewhere.<sup>651</sup> Yet neither the prints of *Vertical Suite* nor their presentation bore marks of this changed situation.<sup>652</sup> In relation to the prints, this seems surprising – given Evans’ self-aware, sometimes critical stance towards earlier primitivist art, as I have mapped it above. It suggests a continued belief, in the spirit of the late 1940s, that through the suite he could enact a serious, positive tribute to colonised cultures in an unproblematic way, indeed that his prints could respond to the criticism of artist’s appropriation of ‘primitive’ forms previously made by Fagg. In relation to the initial exhibition at Erskine’s St George’s Gallery Prints, the well-worn gesture of interpolating ethnographic objects becomes harder to perceive as anything but an ageing primitivist trope – lacking sensitivity to contemporary events – given the simultaneous launch in international locations that included Johannesburg, ten years after the implementation of apartheid.<sup>653</sup>

I have argued that the late manifestation of primitivist ideas in *Vertical Suite* was in large part a backward-looking gesture. Through the prints’ explicit connection to culturally remote objects – via visual resemblance and via the catalogue – Evans placed them in relation to modernist traditions of primitivism on the Continent and in Britain and also the more recent enthusiasms of post-war London. This gesture was made despite a rapidly contracting space for existing forms of primitivist discourse at a moment of accelerating colonial withdrawal. However, the ICA’s events of the late 1940s had also engaged a

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<sup>651</sup> See Rhodes, *Primitivism*, 195-200.

<sup>652</sup> The specific objects and traditions referenced as sources in the *Vertical Suite* catalogue were largely from Francophone West Africa, rather than British colonies; however, British possessions were nearby and the process of decolonisation by European nations intertwined: Mali (the geographic source for *Helmet Mask* and *Standing Figure*) became independent in 1960, as did Gabon (cited for *Corn Ghost*). Outside Africa, New Ireland, referenced in relation to *Thunderbird*, was administered by Australia until 1975.

<sup>653</sup> The international launch is described by Quentin Crewe, ‘Sweet Prints’, February 1958 (Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 896/4/2).

younger set of artists and in particular those who would later form the core of the Independent Group such as Nigel Henderson and Eduardo Paolozzi, the latter of whom was to become a major figure in 1960s printmaking. In the remainder of the section, I consider *Vertical Suite* in relation to this future-facing orientation, exploring how Evans' approach contrasted with that pursued by Paolozzi, in particular. This draws attention to a tension within the suite between Fagg-inspired ethnography and a modernist emphasis on the mystery of 'primitive' objects. It also emphasises a complexity in the response to primitivism in Evans' late-1950s prints that could be lost within Paolozzi's more flamboyant aesthetic.

Though often understood as a progenitor of Pop Art, the core shared interest of the Independent Group's members was a critical appreciation of existing traditions of European modernism.<sup>654</sup> All those involved rejected the formalist claim that art had a universal and ahistorical significance through the inherent communicative potential of its 'plastic values' (that is shapes within compositions), though this idea of common, cross-cultural aesthetic criteria had been one basis for earlier modernist's extension of the domain of art to include 'primitive' objects.<sup>655</sup> However, there was much more sympathy for modernism's tendency to probe the self-confidence of European traditions of knowledge creation and communication, whether questioning the transparency of language, the conventional nature of pictorial representation, or the status of categories, including those that established civilised self against primitive other. The consequent abandonment of existing criteria for determining artistic value provided another way to allow culturally remote objects into

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<sup>654</sup> This is the central (and persuasive) argument of Massey, *The Independent Group*.

<sup>655</sup> Massey *The Independent Group*, 45, identifies Herbert Read as the post-war representative of formalism (often associated with Roger Fry in its origins) though this is a somewhat reductive view of Read's position.

artistic consideration, along with overlooked aspects of Euro-American culture.<sup>656</sup> For example, in the *Patio and Pavilion* section of *This is Tomorrow* (at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1956), Henderson and Paolozzi introduced apparently ‘primitive’ objects (notably a fabricated rock with mock Mayan zoomorphs) amongst a variety of other items and detritus; each piece suggested a symbolic meaning but the whole was so varied as to deny any specific referent.<sup>657</sup> Moreover, the lineage of *Patio and Pavilion* could be traced back through earlier ICA exhibitions with an Independent Group nucleus, notably *Parallels of Life and Art* from 1953 which juxtaposed photographs of ethnographic, technological and popular material, and finally to Fagg’s lectures of the late 1940s (though with his concern for ethnographic specificity now lost).<sup>658</sup>

Both Henderson and Paolozzi formed their primary connections to earlier avant-garde movements via surrealism.<sup>659</sup> However, a self-reflexive consideration of how art communicated knowledge – or failed to do so – had also been a theme of the previous generation of Parisian modernists, and one related to their initial adoption of ‘primitive’ forms and primitivist concepts. In ‘Negro Art and Cubism’, D.H. Kahnweiler argued that a key contribution of African sculpture to the advent of cubism had been in providing the

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<sup>656</sup> The associated language of inclusion could, as a result, mirror previous exclusions, as in Paolozzi’s enthusiasm for the ‘revolutions of the past 40 or 50 years’ which had opened audiences to ‘the works of unprofessional painters – madmen, children, primitives’ (Massey, *The Independent Group*, 29).

<sup>657</sup> Henderson and Paolozzi were given a free hand in decorating the architectural space created by Alison and Peter Smithson; Reyner Banham’s review of *Patio and Pavilion* explicitly described it as ‘primitive’ (see Judith Collins, *Eduardo Paolozzi*, Farnham: Lund Humphries, 2014, 88 and 95 – 96; Massey, *The Independent Group*, 95 – 102).

<sup>658</sup> For *Parallels of Life and Art* see Collins, *Eduardo Paolozzi*, 88 and Massey, *The Independent Group*, 57-60.

<sup>659</sup> For Henderson’s maternal connections to both Bloomsbury and continental surrealism see Massey, *The Independent Group*, 33-36; for Paolozzi’s 1947–49 stay in Paris, and his surrealist connections there, see Dawn Ades, ‘Paolozzi, Surrealism, Ethnography’, Malcolm McLeod et al, *Eduardo Paolozzi: Lost Magic Kingdoms and Six Paper Moons from Nahuatl*, exhibition catalogue, Museum of Mankind, 1985, 60 – 66.

model for an art of 'signs', as an alternative to representation, but where the signs themselves had the presence and character of real objects.<sup>660</sup> The African mask thus became the sign of signs, drawing the attention of the European avant-garde to the arbitrariness of the semiotic system of its own culture and the conventional nature of visual art, opening the way to a rejection of representational techniques and an embrace of abstraction.<sup>661</sup> The innovation of the Independent Group, drawing on surrealist models, was to add a further level of cultural self-awareness, so that their artworks reflected not only on the culturally remote object itself, but also on its subsequent reception, conceptualisation and communication in their own culture. Thus, Paolozzi's *Collage over African Sculpture* (1960) superimposed a clock mechanism over a found-photograph of an ethnographic object in which this object was itself displayed as an art work through its lighting and composition; it was thus not, or not only, the African sculpture which went into the collaged juxtaposition of ideas, but its reframing as an aesthetic object.<sup>662</sup>

Evans, too, was interested in visual signs and communications systems and sceptical towards signification as natural or straightforward. Both his correspondence ahead of the 1956 retrospective and his notebooks contain reflections on the nature of abstract forms and the psychological processes that underlie their meaning, an issues he explored in his art

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<sup>660</sup> Kahnweiler, 'Negro Art and Cubism', 286.

<sup>661</sup> I owe this argument to Michael North, 'Modernism's African Mask', 274 – 76. This statement is intended to capture a specific, historical position, rather than to assert fact; I would, in fact, argue that both language and pictorial representation have important aspects that are natural, universal and transparent, not conventional, arbitrary and opaque.

<sup>662</sup> *Collage over African Sculpture* is illustrated in Rhodes, *Primitivism*, 199.

through repeated uses of the same form in different contexts and times.<sup>663</sup> He also connected these topics to his thinking about ethnographic objects and the primitive. In his unpublished essay on primitivism, he was critical of claims for the universal communicative power of ‘primitive’ objects, whether formalist or from the strand within surrealism which indulged a ‘cult of the “unconscious”’ as the ground for a ‘timeless communion (the unconscious being “timeless”) [with] the artists of Lascaux, the Sahara, the Belgian Congo and New Ireland.’<sup>664</sup> However, at the end of the essay, Evans too seemed to attribute some universal signifying power to the ‘primitive’ object, though with the twist that this was a signification devoid of content. He described how, as we are ‘walking round the glass, dust-proof cases of some wonderful museum’ (and ‘we’ here is the European everyman), we are suddenly ‘spell bound’ before an ‘inscrutable’ object, leading us to abandon our striving for meaning – our ‘questions’ – and instead offer only ‘looks in silence’.<sup>665</sup> Through such a description, Evans aligned himself with the primitivist discourse of earlier modernism outlined by Kahnweiler, a discourse that also took in T.E. Hulme’s positive valuation of the ‘unutterable’, cementing the link to Evans’ own intellectual lineage. The ‘primitive’ object was seen to have an alien, indistinct but undeniable communicative power and yet to be baffling in its isolation and (despite inviting understanding as a sign) refused language or self-explanation.<sup>666</sup>

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<sup>663</sup> Evans thinking on the issue is sophisticated but does not succeed in articulating a totally clear or coherent proposition (see in particular Evans to R.H. Wilenski, 11 August 1956, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 896/1/1/1, and the undated manuscript, TGA 896/1/4/1).

<sup>664</sup> Merlyn Evans notebook (Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 861/1/7/39); punctuation added.

<sup>665</sup> Ibid. Evans sketched out two versions of this conclusion, indicating its importance.

<sup>666</sup> A more recent, sympathetic summary of this position (including acknowledgement of Hulme) is made in Frank Kermode, ‘Modernism, Postmodernism and Explanation’, Barkan and Bush (eds.), *Prehistories of the Future*, 365-66.



The images of *Vertical Suite in Black* were structured to embody precisely this tension between an apparent superfluity of communication and an uncertainty or withholding of final meaning. *Thunderbird*, for example, at once revelled in the evocative power of mark making while hinting at some other, hidden significance. Evans' catalogue entry for this print noted how it introduced 'a dynamic element of time and emergence' to the series and a range of marks were mobilised to convey sudden movement. These ranged from the motion blur in the lower-right brush strokes – giving a visual up-thrust – to the directional lines of the 'beak' at top-left (which also gave a hint of three dimensionality) and the overall, off-balance spin of the underlying diagonal cross-shape (an unsteadiness emphasised by the flurry of thinner lines, perhaps feathers, at top-right).<sup>667</sup> On the other hand, however, the image also drew attention to its own potential status as a sign, and one of uncertain reference. Evans' had previously described his early works as comprising 'ideographs', and that same idea was present, and emphasised, in *Vertical Suite*.<sup>668</sup> In *Thunderbird*, the visible brush marks, linearity and use of black ink on white paper all suggest calligraphy, that the form could be understood as a token.<sup>669</sup> As a sign outside a shared code, however, a form such as this could, finally, offer no referent. Its complex internal structure might hint at a written language, but it was one that would be perpetually indecipherable.

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<sup>667</sup> In its use of these techniques, *Thunderbird* relates to Evans' concurrent drawings of bullfights and his 'Centrifugal Compositions' in oil (illustrated in Gooding, *Merlyn Evans*, 129-31).

<sup>668</sup> The statement was in the longer autobiographical note prepared in 1956 and reprinted in *The Political Paintings of Merlyn Evans*, exhibition catalogue.

<sup>669</sup> In the exhibition catalogue, Erskine described Evans' brushstrokes as a 'deft calligraphy' (Erskine, 'The Artist', unpaginated).

Evans' approach to the 'primitive' in the 1950s thus embodied a particular contradiction. On the one hand, he distanced himself from many predecessors (and from his own earlier position) through his insistence on the culturally remote object's ethnographic specificity and on the important interpretative role of the ethnographer, points made by Fagg in the particular political and cultural context of the late 1940s. On the other, he asserted (visually and in writing) that the core value of such objects was as a locus of the ineffable. A related paradox comes into view if *Vertical Suite's* representation of the primitive is considered as, specifically, an act of printmaking. The employment of a print medium might reasonably have been understood, in the first instance, as aligning the suite with the mode of the ethnographer, Evans' prints having something of the quality of imagined illustrations for an ethnographic fantasy. Unique, hand-produced indigenous products were captured and re-presented, via a European technology, as two-dimensional, repeated and mechanised images. There was certainly a contrast between Evans' translation of carvings into prints and the well-known response of Henry Moore to the British Museum's collection, where the sculptor adopted direct carving in imitation of the objects he found.<sup>670</sup> However, the employment of printmaking could also be understood in a different way, as rehearsing an aspect of 'primitive' art practice as understood by those who emphasised their alleged refusal of self-explanation. In *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908), Wilhelm Worringer had contrasted the confident but contingent cultures of post-Renaissance – but pre-modern – Europe, whose visual manifestation was naturalism, with those of 'primitive' – and also modern – societies, whose cultures asserted stability in the face of threat and whose visual manifestation was abstraction. The book was first published

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<sup>670</sup> See Henry Moore, 'Primitive Art', 267 – 271.

in English in 1948 giving it salience in the following decade, though Evans would have encountered its key idea already via Hulme. An important characteristic of Worringer's societies of abstraction was the use of repetition: artistic forms being reasserted, rather than explained through new ones.<sup>671</sup> Thus, from this alternative perspective, reproduction through printmaking was not an imposition on the objects of Evans' inspiration, but a tribute to the very essence of their wider culture and congruent with their abstract form and withheld meaning.

While *Vertical Suite* thus held the potential for contrasting, even contradictory, interpretations, the series was unified by the sense it projected that each print was a work of intellectual seriousness – capable, indeed, of exploring and holding in balance paradoxical ideas. As has been seen, seriousness was something that the images wore on their sleeve. The use of black and white, the scale of the impressions and even the deployment of 'primitive' imagery all connoted artistic significance. These visual signals were matched by the weighty thematic content, the series engaging with the history of primitivism and exploring key modernist ideas of communication and its (claimed) limits. In this context, Evans' use of printmaking and his specific choice of medium had a further resonance. Throughout the colonial period in Euro-America, reproductive technologies had been the means used to create and commercialise a different, popular conception of the 'primitive' as an exotic consumer spectacle, with examples ranging from newspaper engravings of imperial exhibitions to post-war films such as *Where No Vultures Fly*, 1951 ('An adventure story of

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<sup>671</sup> Kermodé, 'Modernism, Postmodernism', 365.

savage Africa’) with its lithographed poster by John Minton.<sup>672</sup> As prints, Evans’ suite shared ground with such material, but this commonality only served to emphasise its claim to difference. The limited edition, with its painterly sugar-lift aquatint technique, high production values and austere monochrome, marked the suites’ distance from expectations of printmaking as a popular form – still exemplified in the late 1950s by the colour lithographs considered in previous chapters. As has been seen, Robert Erskine’s approach at St George’s Gallery Prints could vacillate between the available conceptions of printmaking, sometimes appealing to the idea of a popular form, sometimes attempting to pitch towards a fine art presentation. In *Vertical Suite*, Evans was able to use this same ambiguity productively: the idea of the print as popular form was present, but as a point of contrast that reinforced the works’ claim to be a space in which the primitive could remain firmly outside the kitsch.

It was in this conception of a modernist primitivism redeemed from the wider culture – and the concomitant seriousness of his visual approach to it – that Evans departed from the direction being taken by younger artists associated with the Independent Group such as Paolozzi. *Vertical Suite in Black* made overt its awareness of the already long history of primitivism, but also placed itself as a further step in that history, as a continuing dialogue between European modernism and indigenous art.<sup>673</sup> By the late 1950s, however, such a

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<sup>672</sup> Wendy Webster, ‘Where No Vultures Fly’, BFI Screen online, <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1401448/index.html>, accessed 12<sup>th</sup> June 2020; for other examples of popular reproductions of the primitive see Barkan and Bush, ‘Introduction’, 91 – 96.

<sup>673</sup> That such a dialogue remained one-way was made clear when artists such as the black Jamaican Namba Roy were chastised by critics for attempts to ‘assimilate ... European visual modes’ (Henry Arden, ‘A Negro Carver’, *Art News and Review*, 28<sup>th</sup> May 1955, 6).

positioning risked appearing naïve (and perhaps even culpable) as the freedom of European artists to take and remake the forms of colonised cultures was put in question by accelerating imperial retreat. Indeed, while Paolozzi's *Collage over African Sculpture* ironised the Euro-American reframing of West African sculpture as high art, the 'primitive' object was simply absent, in terms of recognisable visual elements from his screenprint series of the 1960s, such as *As is When* (1965) and *Moonstrips Empire News* (1967) (Figure 77).<sup>674</sup> Instead, it was the jarring juxtaposition of pattern and signs in these prints that represented the residue of his earlier interest in primitivism. That this was the origin of his collage aesthetic was made explicit somewhat later in an exhibition he curated at the invitation of the Museum of Mankind, London in 1985, *Lost Magic Kingdoms*.<sup>675</sup> In an introduction to the accompanying book, Paolozzi described the post-war roots of his interest in 'primitive' art and connected his early experiences of it with the value he subsequently found in visual juxtaposition and with his claim that there 'is a special sort of cognitive experience where a person can look at, and associate, disparate things at the same time'.<sup>676</sup> The ability to make this kind of combination was, he claimed, a characteristic of attitudes to the primitive he had discovered while in Paris from 1947 to 1949. In his own exhibition at the Museum of Mankind, he aimed for the same effect, deliberately ignoring origins and mixing objects valued as authentic with productions made for the popular Western market.

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<sup>674</sup> The film *The History of Nothing* (1962) had some possible 'primitive' references in its images and soundtrack; a small robot head with a hint of an Easter Island mo'ai in the screenprint *Bash* (1971) emphasises the omission of such imagery from most of Paolozzi's prints.

<sup>675</sup> The Museum of Mankind in Mayfair housed the ethnographic collections of the British Museum from 1970 (when it opened under William Fagg) to 1997, when it was folded back into the museum's main site.

<sup>676</sup> Eduardo Paolozzi, 'Primitive Art, Paris and London', McLeod et al, *Lost Magic Kingdoms*, 10; see also Dawn Ades, 'Paolozzi, Surrealism, Ethnography' in the same catalogue. Paolozzi's claim that an interest in the 'primitive' was rare in post-war British artistic culture does not stand up to the evidence presented earlier.

Evans' careful visual reflection on individual objects was thus inverted and his sources collapsed into the kitsch.<sup>677</sup>

In the catalogue's main essay, Malcolm McLeod interpreted Paolozzi's miscellany as drawing attention to the way in which European culture had created an idea of the primitive as strange and inexplicable, as 'magical', in a way that undermined that culture's simultaneous attempt to understand indigenous cultures through the classifying procedures of anthropology – precisely the tension I have located in *Vertical Suite*. The result of Paolozzi's curation-as-collage, however, was that while he satirised the ethnographic approach that structured conventional museum displays, and that drew Evans' respect, his exhibition simply re-enacted the primitivist discourse in which indigenous cultures were presented as 'magical' or fodder for the knowing European's association of 'disparate things' (as McLeod obliquely acknowledged). Moreover, the same observation could be extended to Paolozzi's earlier collages and prints, given their shared use of effects of juxtaposition derived from surrealist approaches to primitivism.

The comparison with Paolozzi's work helps explicate the complex and somewhat anomalous historical position of *Vertical Suite in Black*. Paolozzi's visual carnival suggested an ironic spirit; however, it also reflected (and to an extent masked) adherence to a well-established style of primitivist discourse. In contrast, the slightly earlier *Vertical Suite* was,

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<sup>677</sup> The Museum of Mankind's director, Malcom McLeod, stated that Paolozzi had 'no interest in where objects come from' concentrating 'his attention on the phenomena without any need to consider their context'; the inclusion of 'inauthentic' items served 'to emphasise the uncertainty or impermanence of European criteria for classifying the products of other cultures' (Malcolm McLeod, 'Paolozzi and Identity', McLeod et al, *Lost Magic Kingdoms*, 22-25, 38 and 46); see also Rhodes, *Primitivism*, 201.

as I have attempted to show, complex in its address to the diverse historical ideas subsumed by primitivism, from turn-of-the-century Paris to late-1940s London, if somewhat myopic about the immediate context of decolonisation. However, by retaining explicit visual borrowings from culturally remote objects held in European collections and in the absence of the kind of distancing technique provided by the new collage aesthetic – indeed with a print technique which emphasised its earnestness – the suite was created in a mode which was soon to appear obsolete.

In the following section, I complement consideration of *Vertical Suite* by looking at further publications by St George's Gallery Prints: a single work by Josef Herman and a further suite, by George Chapman. As with Evans' suite, these prints show how Erskine's publications can be profitably considered in relation to both previous concerns of modern art and those that were to come to the fore in the printmaking of the following decade.

### **The 'life that is going on there': Josef Herman's *Two Miners* and George Chapman's the *Rhondda Suite***

When Erskine presented his first group show in August 1956, subtitled *Contemporary British Masters*, the catalogue promised that more artists would soon be going to Paris to make prints for the Gallery.<sup>678</sup> Among the prominent figures named was Josef Herman. Herman had no previous printmaking experience but he had established a significant reputation as a painter and draughtsman. Indeed, 1956 was a significant year for him, with a first retrospective held in the spring at Whitechapel, just ten years after he had first gained a

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<sup>678</sup> Erskine, 'Introduction', *Colour Lithographs and Etchings*, exhibition catalogue, unpaginated.

London dealer.<sup>679</sup> However, for unknown reasons Herman never made the promised trip to a Parisian print atelier. Instead, his first lithographs were made at the new Curwen Studio in 1960, with two exhibited at Erskine's *The Graven Image* exhibition in 1962.<sup>680</sup> In this pair of prints, Herman reprised two subjects that he had previously developed in his painting: the nursing mother, in *Mother and Child*, and the Welsh miner, his most characteristic theme, in *Two Miners* (the latter being available in two versions, one black and white and one with colour, Figures 78 and 79).

By the time Herman's *Two Miners* went on sale, however, St George's Gallery Prints had already published work by another artist whose reputation was closely associated with Welsh mining subjects. This was George Chapman whose *Rhondda Suite* (a set of six etchings with aquatint and limited relief-printed colour) was launched in 1960 (Figures 80 to 85).<sup>681</sup> Though two years older than Herman, Chapman was the less established of the two.

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<sup>679</sup> *Josef Herman: Paintings and Drawings 1940-56*, exhibition catalogue, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, March-April 1956; Evans' retrospective was a little later in the year, from October to November. Herman's dealer was Roland, Browse and Delbanco where, according to Henry Roland, he swiftly became 'what one calls, our most prominent "House-Artist"' (quoted in Monica Bohm-Duchen, *The Art and Life of Josef Herman: 'in labour my spirit finds itself'*, Aldershot: Lund Humphries/Ashgate, 2009, 96).

<sup>680</sup> *The Graven Image*, exhibition catalogue, Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours, 1<sup>st</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> May 1962, unpaginated. Stanley Jones states that Herman's first stone lithograph was *Two Miners* and implies, in the caption to an accompanying photograph, that this was underway in 1960 (*Stanley Jones*, 86 and 90); however, Nini Herman suggests that Josef's initial stint at Curwen Studio was in 1962 (*Josef Herman: A Working Life*, London: Quartet Books, 1996, 165). Bohm-Duchen convincingly dates *Two Miners* to 1960-62 and *Mother and Child* to 1961-62; she also dates *The Cart* to 1960, though this was not published at the time (*Josef Herman*, 113-15). Tate has a black and white copy of *Two Miners* and dates it to 1960. Herman had previously shown two drawings at the first *The Graven Image* show in 1959. Printmaking did not become central to Herman's practice, but he returned to the Curwen Press in, at least, 1965, 1974 and at the end of his life in 1999 (Bohm-Duchen, *Josef Herman*, 113 and 155; Jones, *Stanley Jones*, 139-40).

<sup>681</sup> The suite could be bought as a set with an additional, seventh, impression; the latter comprised a hand-written prose poem in which Chapman described and reflected on his response to the Rhondda, complemented by sketch-like figures in the right hand margin (Figure 86, also reproduced in Robert Meyrick, *George Chapman at the Goldmark Gallery*, exhibition Catalogue, Goldmark, Uppingham, March 1992, 45). Though the catalogue refers only to impressions with colour, black and white versions of several images have appeared for sale (*George Chapman: the Rhondda suite*, exhibition catalogue, St George's Gallery Prints, London, 3<sup>rd</sup> August – 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1960, unpaginated).



After working as a graphic designer in advertising, he had gone on to study at the Slade and the RCA, but his initial years as a painter had needed support from teaching.<sup>682</sup> His first solo show in the capital had not been until 1956, the same year as Herman's retrospective and when Chapman was already in his late forties.<sup>683</sup> He was thus at once a relatively new commercial talent, championed by Erskine, and a member of the generation of artists trained before the war that included Herman, Evans and other St George's Gallery Prints associates.

Despite these contrasting career histories, the two artists had in common a personal mythology in which an encounter with a Welsh mining community provided the critical inspiration for creative success. In Herman's later reminiscences, his epiphany came in the summer of 1944 on a first visit to the village of Ystradgynlais. Here, the sight of a body of soot-covered miners – silhouetted against the setting sun on their walk home – had immediately filled an 'inner emptiness'.<sup>684</sup> Within fifteen months, his work from Ystradgynlais was being toured by the Welsh Arts Council and it provided the content of his first show with Roland, Browse and Delbanco in London. The Arts Council tour also led to a BBC broadcast by the artist in 1946 (with the text reprinted in the *Welsh Review*) that itself initiated a public persona binding Herman to this particular place and its people.<sup>685</sup> Similarly,

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<sup>682</sup> Including at the Central School in London; Robert Meyrick, *George Chapman*, 4 and 9.

<sup>683</sup> Chapman's exhibitions are listed *ibid.*, 23. His first solo show was at the Piccadilly Gallery; Meyrick states that this had limited success (5) and critical reception was mixed with a tepid response from Quentin Bell ('Round the London Galleries', the *Listener*, 21 June 1965, 860) but enthusiasm from Louis McIntosh ('George Chapman', *Art News and Review*, 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1956, 6). However, it was relatively swiftly followed by others, in Cambridge in 1959, and at the Zwemmer Gallery, London, in early 1960.

<sup>684</sup> Josef Herman, *Related Twilights: Notes from an Artist's Diary*, London: Robson Books, 1975, 91.

<sup>685</sup> The text ('A Welsh Mining Village') was subsequently further reprinted in J. Herman, *Related Twilights*, 100-105.

George Chapman's account of his first sight of the Rhondda Valley in 1953 also emphasised a chance arrival and, though his vocabulary is less spiritually weighted than Herman's, the event is again described as transformational, providing a defining subject to an artistic career that had previously lacked direction.<sup>686</sup> Chapman's recollection of this moment was to feature prominently in a short, biographical film broadcast by the BBC in January 1961, but by then his association with the Rhondda was already well established through responses to his solo shows.<sup>687</sup>

In this section, I use the apparently overlapping subject matter of Herman's *Two Miners* and Chapman's *the Rhondda Suite* as a way to bring out the underlying contrast in their visual presentation of it and the divergent orientations that this revealed, in particular in relation to themes of time and change.<sup>688</sup> This contrast offers further evidence for the diversity of the work that Erskine commissioned and the idiosyncrasy of some of his specific publications, qualities that are masked if St George's Gallery Prints is considered primarily as a precursor to a following 'print boom'. However, the contrast also gives an unusual perspective on a well-rehearsed tension in mid-1950s art discourse between an existing modernist stress on permanent values, on the one hand, and emerging ideas celebrating the

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<sup>686</sup> For the 1953 date see Meyrick, *George Chapman*, 10.

<sup>687</sup> See, for example, John Dalton, 'Look Hard at the Rhondda', the *Guardian*, 27<sup>th</sup> October 1959, 7. The text for the BBC film is reproduced as 'George Chapman' in Huw Wheldon (ed.), *Monitor: An Anthology*, London: Macdonald, 1962 (where the broadcast date is incorrectly given as December 1961/ January 1962); it is discussed in Michael Clegg, "'The Art Game': Television, Monitor, and British Art at the turn of the 1960s", *British Art Studies*, 8, June 2018 <https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-08/mclegg>, accessed 4<sup>th</sup> September 2020. The story of Chapman's arrival in the Rhondda was also rehearsed in Jasper Rose, 'George Chapman's Rhondda Valley', the *Studio*, May 1962, 178.

<sup>688</sup> A contrast between Herman and Chapman is drawn, briefly, in Meyrick, *George Chapman*, 10.

immediate and the transitory, on the other.<sup>689</sup> I begin with Herman's lithograph of miners, tracing how it recapitulated both form and content from his earlier paintings despite the reality of change in the mining industry. I propose that such continuity reflected Herman's commitment to an art that embodied the unchanging metaphysical essence of his subject. As such, and in a similar way to Evans' suite, the print thus illustrated how Erskine's publications could bring core concerns of modern art – here the isolation of ideal forms – to the centre of printmaking, but also how, by the turn of the 1960s, those were issues primarily associated with an older generation. In addition, and again as with *Vertical Suite*, Herman's orientation to the past led to his print echoing themes connected to the immediate post-war period, in this case a vision of Welsh miners rooted in Herman's own participation in the Festival of Britain. I then turn to Chapman's the *Rhondda Suite*, where the concerns of the turn of the 1960s came to the fore. I argue that in the prints new themes of consumption and mass communication – themes that were to dominate printmaking in the following decade – intruded on his depiction of the mining valleys and marked them as sites of change. However, rather than conveying these through a self-conscious technical innovation in his facture (in a way that might prefigure the collage methods adopted by later printmakers) Chapman utilised traditional graphic means.<sup>690</sup> Again, there was a parallel to Evans in that Chapman used the associations of his print medium (his choice facilitated by Erskine's championing of a range of forms) to convey an

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<sup>689</sup> This has been framed, for example, by Anne Massey as a struggle between an older ICA generation (in particular Herbert Read) as champions of ideal forms set against the flux of modernity and Independent Group theorists (notably Lawrence Alloway and Tony del Renzio) as champions of representing that flux (*The Independent Group*, 20, 60, 77 and passim).

<sup>690</sup> This is not to deny Chapman's innovation in etching method; specifically using line and colour on a single plate, as noted in the catalogue.

important part of his meaning. In this case, I will suggest, the etched line acted as the guarantor of the close, empirical observation that underlay Chapman's distinctive version of realism.

Josef Herman had been brought up in poverty in a Jewish district of Warsaw, studying and exhibiting there before fleeing state-sanctioned anti-semitism in 1938. After a stay in Belgium, he arrived in Glasgow in 1940 where success came rapidly: by 1943 he was in London, with a solo exhibition at the Lefevre Gallery. His work at this time emphasised his Polish-Jewish identity, with scenes of family and community, and interpretations of Yiddish songs and stories, in a style indebted to Chagall.<sup>691</sup> It was in part as a response to a creative trough following his Lefevre exhibition that Herman chose to holiday in Brecon, Wales, where his trip to Ystradgynlais formed an unplanned addition. In later reminiscences, Herman claimed that as soon as he saw the miners in the sunset he knew 'with certainty that this village was the right place for me.'<sup>692</sup> Alongside the personal response was a professional conviction that the village could provide the new subject matter he was seeking for his work and one that would sustain it 'for years to come'.<sup>693</sup> His visual approach to this new subject was eclectic, encompassing scenes of the village and its surrounding slag heaps,

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<sup>691</sup> Philip Hendy's catalogue introduction for the Lefevre exhibition stressed its Jewish themes as did the critical response (Bohm-Duchen, *Josef Herman*, 70) and Herman's Jewishness remained an element in his reception, for example in 1953 Michael Middleton described him as 'touched by a racial melancholy inherited from his forefathers' ('Josef Herman/ The Pitmen's Painter', the *Studio*, November 1953, 143). In 1948 Herman castigated himself for his earlier use of 'Chagallic trick[s]' (Bohm-Duchen, *Josef Herman*, 70). His choice of subjects was undoubtedly influenced by personal experience – he learnt of the Nazi's murder of his family in 1942.

<sup>692</sup> J. Herman, *Related Twilights*, 91.

<sup>693</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

portraits, and studies of miners at work both above and below ground (he was swiftly able to arrange sketching trips to the coalface).<sup>694</sup> Nonetheless, as his work related to Ystradgynlais developed, certain key visual tropes were repeated, among them the pair of crouching figures that were later to be utilised in his lithograph, *Two Miners*.

Though confirmed by the title, the identity of the two men in the lithograph as miners is evident from the picture alone (Figures 78 and 79).<sup>695</sup> Working jackets are stained black, while a penumbra of marks around the arms suggest a coating of dust. Helmets and lamps secure the identification: the figure on the right having his lamp on, that on the left seeming to have no lamp but with the empty metal fastening still shining brightly.<sup>696</sup> Helmet and lamp are an attribute of the miner across Herman's pictures, carrying with them a suggestion of the halo that he had discerned around the silhouetted miners' heads on his first visit to Ystradgynlais.<sup>697</sup> In *Two Miners*, the right-hand figure is shown kneeling, an outsize hand resting on his knee, while his comrade sits low on his haunches. As noted, the crouch was a posture Herman had used previously, potentially connoting exhaustion or the claustrophobia of work under low ceilings though it was also used for miners above ground (Figure 87). More practically, the pose allowed him to endow figures with the powerful

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<sup>694</sup> Bohm-Duchen, *Josef Herman*, 87.

<sup>695</sup> *Two Miners* is closely related to an oil painting, *Miners*, now in Southampton Museum, <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/miners-17592>. No date exists for this work (confirmed in correspondence from Southampton Art Gallery, 25 November 2019) hence it is impossible to tell if it was a pre-existing work, prepared as artwork for the lithograph, or produced after to reach a different market. The interpretation of the lithograph given here is not altered by any of these specific scenarios.

<sup>696</sup> I am indebted to the Mining Art Gallery, Bishop Auckland for this interpretation (personal correspondence, 28 August 2019).

<sup>697</sup> In a journal entry from 1968 Herman wrote, 'John Russell-Taylor once shrewdly observed that the miner's cap for me is what the halo was to the medieval artist: a symbol' (Nini Herman (ed.), *The Journal of Joseph Herman*, London: Peter Halban in association with the European Jewish Publication Society, 2003, 63).

physical presence he sought but with less risk of them appearing lumpen or caricatural.<sup>698</sup> In *Two Miners*, a further consequence of the men's squat is an uncertainty of balance that emphasises their unexpected physical intimacy, the figures seemingly conjoined between arm and leg. Again, such intimacy had been a feature of Herman's pictures for some time, the drawing *Miners Resting* from the late 1940s, for example, showing two men with head on shoulder and arm on arm.<sup>699</sup>

Behind the miners, at least in the colour version of the lithograph, is neither the black of the pit nor the grey of Ystradgynlais streets but rather a warm yellow-ochre, complemented by a rich umber on the ground and within the figures themselves. Stanley Jones has described how Herman was uncertain about his colour choice while working on the print at the Curwen Studio, but those he eventually chose were a variant on his core Ystradgynlais palette of radiant copper sky and rich dark-brown figures, colours which matched his recollection of that first sunset and which reappeared in his paintings (Figure 88). Jones also suggests that Herman's approach to creating his plates was unusual: 'He spent much time in trying to etch out the forms of the figures with nitric acid on the limestone until he had achieved the result he desired'.<sup>700</sup> When he was working in oil paint, Herman used complex systems of underpainting and washes with the aim of achieving a jewel-like effect of inner light and the finished result of *Two Miners* suggests he was after a

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<sup>698</sup> For this criticism see the *Times*, 11 November 1952, 2 and 17 February 1955, 12; see also Basil Taylor in the *Spectator*, March 1956, quoted in Bohm-Duchen *Josef Herman*, 109.

<sup>699</sup> Illustrated in Bohm-Duchen *Josef Herman*, plate 51; Bohm-Duchen makes this point about an 'unusual form of male bonding' (79).

<sup>700</sup> Stanley Jones, *Stanley Jones*, 86.

similar effect here.<sup>701</sup> Certainly, the figures – under-printed in brown and with a final, gloss black layer in the colour version – achieve a rich luminosity that is enhanced by the flashes of unprinted white paper at lamp and neckerchief.

A decade before the publication of *Two Miners*, a row of five squatting men, terminated to the left by a single standing figure and backed by a copper-orange wall, had comprised the main elements of Herman's large mural *Miners*, a commission for the 'Minerals of the Island' pavilion at the Festival of Britain (Figure 89).<sup>702</sup> The six men depicted were grouped in twos and, though none of these pairs was an exact model for *Two Miners*, the combination of dress, hands, stance and colour gave them a close family resemblance – if on a different scale – that makes the mural a key context for interpreting the print. The year of the Festival was a significant one for Herman. He stated later that it was in 1951 that he finally arrived at a technique adequate to the qualities of his Ystradgynlais subject.<sup>703</sup> Moreover, the year also marked the zenith of Herman's reputation, in the words of Monica Bohm-Duchen, 'as a British artist in tune with his times'.<sup>704</sup> His Britishness had been officially established through taking citizenship in 1948, while his reputation as an artist was confirmed by the mural commission and an invitation to contribute to the Arts Council's Festival exhibition, *60 for 51*, for which he painted *South Wales*, again featuring a pair of crouching miners.<sup>705</sup> An affinity between his Ystradgynlais pictures and the contemporary mood – or at least one strand within it – manifested in the alignment between his mural and

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<sup>701</sup> Jack Lindsay, 'Introduction', 10.

<sup>702</sup> The mural measured 132 x 282 cm and was painted on board in the studio and then installed on site.

<sup>703</sup> N. Herman, *Josef Herman*, 94.

<sup>704</sup> Bohm-Duchen *Josef Herman*, 99.

<sup>705</sup> *South Wales* is illustrated in Bohm-Duchen, *Josef Herman*, plates 80.

the wider message of the 'Minerals of the Island' exhibition, which was itself set within the overall Festival story. The exhibition celebrated how, since the industrial revolution, the land of Britain had provided the materials for its continuing strength; but it did this with an awareness of the labour given, and the risks taken, by the workers who had extracted those riches – even putting a miner on hand to guide and inform visitors.<sup>706</sup> The tired yet dignified physical presence of the figures in Herman's mural matched this story seamlessly, to the extent that Philip Hendy suggested the painted miners had more reality – and more drama – than the actual miner present.<sup>707</sup>

One effect of these two, high-profile works on display at the Festival was to cement Herman's reputation as an artist symbiotically linked to South Wales mining (though in reality he also left Ystradgynlais in 1951, to recuperate from ill health, and never returned to live there).<sup>708</sup> This was aided by an established schema associating mining with art. In 1950, for example, the AIA had organised an exhibition, *The Coalminers*, which combined amateur work by miners with that of professional artists, including Herman and Henry Moore, and which became the subject of a television film.<sup>709</sup> Certainly the story of an exiled artist who had found subject, meaning and companionship in a mining community sustained Herman's public profile in the first half of the decade. His wife Nini recollected that 'once his life

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<sup>706</sup> See Atkinson, *The Festival*, 87.

<sup>707</sup> Philip Hendy, 'Art on the South Bank', *Britain To-Day*, July 1951, 29-33, quoted in Bohm-Duchen, *Josef Herman*, 101.

<sup>708</sup> Two years later, Michael Middleton could still end a profile of the artist, 'But the studio in Ystradgynlais is still there, waiting for Joe-Bach [i.e. Herman] to return' ('The Pitmen's Painter', 145); reflecting on the Festival in 1977, G.S. Whittet noted how Herman's mural '[set] his seal on coal miners that made his name and fame' ('Encouragement for Artists', Banham and Hillier, *Tonic*, 181).

<sup>709</sup> Radford, *Art for a Purpose*, 160. The film was produced by the Documentary and Technicians Alliance (the 'DATA Film Unit'.)



among the miners assumed the nature of a mystique', more was written about him than about any of his contemporaries and in articles with titles such as 'Josef Herman and the Miners', 'The Artist down the Pit' or 'The Painter of Ystradgynlais'.<sup>710</sup> Herman himself bolstered the idea of the South Wales mining community as uniquely hospitable, both in general and to himself as an artist and émigré. In the mural *Miners* for example, the physical proximity between men underground acted as a visual correlate for the communal habit of mind that he perceived to exist among them, while their imprecise gaze, their crouch and the warmth of colour all acted to include the viewer.<sup>711</sup> Similarly, his 1946 radio talk told of how he was greeted on his first arrival in Ystradgynlais as "no stranger here", a day later addressed as Joe, then shortly after nick-named 'Joe Bach'.<sup>712</sup> Such a presentation was, however, only a partial truth on both a personal level and more generally. Monica Bohm-Duchen notes that most Ystradgynlais residents were simply indifferent to the artist, who maintained his own cultural separation from the village through car ownership and overseas travel.<sup>713</sup> Moreover, at a national level, mining communities could be hostile to foreigners who lacked Herman's exotic but unthreatening profession. During the post-war years, repeated attempts were made to solve mining labour shortages by using immigrant workers

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<sup>710</sup> N. Herman, *Josef Herman*, 86. Nini Herman (Josef's second wife) is a partial (and not always accurate) biographer and I have not been able to locate articles with these titles; however, the spirit of her comment can be accepted (buttressed by the reality of Michael Middleton's article 'The Pitmen's Painter' and Neville Wallis's 'Pitmen's Painter', the *Observer*, 25<sup>th</sup> March 1956, 15). Peter Lord has noted that the story of Herman's vision at Ystradgynlais, retold in the 1946 talk, 'became as familiar as his paintings' (*The Visual Culture of Wales: Industrial Society* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), 237).

<sup>711</sup> See *ibid.*, 103 for an assertion of miner's ingrained communal habits; also see *Miners Singing* illustrated in Bohm-Duchen, *Josef Herman*, plate 78.

<sup>712</sup> J. Herman, *Related Twilights*, 103. The story is retold in Middleton, 'The Pitmen's Painter' emphasising its place in the Herman mythology. In a later essay, 'A Strange Son of the Valley', he offered a parallel to his own story in that of Moishe, a Jewish emigrant from the Russian empire who found a place as a miner in Wales and practiced his job as an 'art' (Jacob Sontag (ed.), *Jewish Writing Today*, London: Valentine, Mitchell and Co., 1974, 131-32, reprinted in J. Herman, *Related Twilights*, 106-111).

<sup>713</sup> Bohm-Duchen, *Josef Herman*, 84.

from the Continent (including Hungarian refugees after 1956) all of which failed due to the resistance of local union branches.<sup>714</sup> Herman's output of art and words thus helped establish a particular, post-war idealisation of miners and their families. This was a significant simplification, but helped his pictures find an audience, in particular among the progressive middle class where the combination of Continental expressionist style, refugee artist and dignified, welcoming working-class subject matter had a strong appeal.<sup>715</sup>

The visual link between Herman's Festival mural and his lithograph, *Two Miners*, created almost a decade later, makes apparent a continuity in his treatment of the subject across media and time that excluded any recognition of change. Indeed, that Herman's depiction of miners was idealised, static and ahistorical was something of an established point in critical commentary even during his career. For example, though John Berger was an early champion of his work, he saw a weakness in Herman's perceived failure to embody the miners' potential for political agency – to be leaders of change rather than hieratic monuments.<sup>716</sup> Michael Middleton found similar qualities of monumentality in the work, but instead saw them as among its principal strengths: Herman 'would like his grave,

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<sup>714</sup> William Ashworth documents schemes to utilise first Polish and then other European workers in 1947 and Italians in 1951; in all cases recruitment was successful but placements required the agreement of local NUM branches which was rarely forthcoming—those in the expanding fields of the East Midlands being most accepting (William Ashworth, *The History of the British Coal Industry, Vol. 5; 1946 – 1982: The Nationalized Industry*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, 152 and 164). In Ashworth's view (164) 'Insularity and obstinacy thus played a depressing part' in the failure.

<sup>715</sup> Osi Rhys Osmond, 'Carboniferous Collisions: Josef Herman's Epiphany in Ystradgynlais', paper published as part of the Creu-Cyfle Cultural Explosion project, Cardiff, Institute of Welsh Affairs, 2006, 33; Bohm-Duchen, *Josef Herman*, 96.

<sup>716</sup> John Berger, 'Dusk and Dawn', the *New Statesman and Nation*, 31 March 1956, quoted in Bohm-Duchen, *Josef Herman*, 110. Herman was clear on his own rejection of any kind of realism which 'has always irritated me; it is so much less than reality. It lacks what nature has in abundance; the power to move our feelings' (*Related Twilights*, 96).

weighty and sombre images to exist outside time, as symbols of all toiling humanity'.<sup>717</sup> In his autobiographical writing, the artist, too, described his miners as 'walking monuments'; the miner was 'the man of Ystradgynlais', his appearance 'more impressive and singular' than other workers, more communicative of the essentials of labour and dignity.<sup>718</sup> He asserted that all his figures of labourers (miners, fishermen and peasants) should be viewed as 'symbolic' rather than as individuals, though he also acknowledged a tension between his idealist intent ('the shining ideas with metaphysical centres I was truly after') and his interest in depicting the world of contemporary industry ('being drawn from my earliest beginnings to social motifs').<sup>719</sup> In the context of wartime and post-war British art, Herman was seen as a progressive figure, credited with introducing a version of expressionism to Britain. However, his understanding of expressionism was one which dealt in unchanging, archetypal forms and aligned him with an existing British modernist tradition which linked the formalism of Roger Fry to Herbert Read's interest in symbol within psychoanalysis and design.<sup>720</sup>

Yet Herman's abstracting notion of the miner, and its realisation in the continuity of his depiction between 1951 and 1960, was asserted despite a context in which mining itself was changing radically. Machinery remained an absence from Herman's mining pictures, but

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<sup>717</sup> Middleton, 'The Pitmen's Painter', 144; Basil Taylor, writing in 1956, similarly saw the mining pictures as neither political statements nor topographical depictions of a specific industry but rather invocations of 'our human destiny bound to labour' (*Josef Herman: Drawings*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1956, 5).

<sup>718</sup> J. Herman, *Related Twilights*, 102. Non-face workers at the pit are largely absent from Herman's art and writing.

<sup>719</sup> J. Herman, *Related Twilights*, 51 and 102; N. Herman (ed.) *Journals*, 64. Herman also links this idealism to his recapitulated iconography: 'True creativeness calls for a repetition, in technique as well as in style; thus we achieve the intuitive familiarity with our restricted imagery, our inner world' (*Related Twilights*, 96).

<sup>720</sup> For Herman as an Expressionist, see 'Portrait of the Artist: Josef Herman', *Art News and Review*, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1956. For the strand of aesthetics linking Fry to Read see Harrison, *English Art and Modernism*, 248-49.

mechanisation had been a necessity, given the uncompetitive state of the industry inherited by the National Coal Board (NCB) and the urgent need for more output starkly revealed by the winter crisis that followed nationalisation in January 1947.<sup>721</sup> By 1956, 88% of coal was cut mechanically (up from 59% before the war) while investment in plant meant that 94% was now mechanically conveyed.<sup>722</sup> More fundamentally, from the mid-1950s, the position of coal in the British economy was abruptly and unexpectedly changed.<sup>723</sup> In 1956, the NCB premised its revised *Plan for Coal* on continuing expansion, but in the event this turned out to be the peak year for domestic coal demand as substitution by oil gathered pace. By 1959, a closure programme covering thirty-six pits was being implemented and in total in that year employment in the industry shrank by 70,000, the start of a process which would reduce employment by a third by the mid-1960s.<sup>724</sup> While the anthracite mines around Ystradgynlais were part of a discrete economy within the wider industry, they were, nonetheless, subject to the same trends. In fact a number of the mines around the village had closed shortly before the Second World War as part of a general and long-term contraction in South Wales mining.<sup>725</sup>

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<sup>721</sup> Ashworth, *The History of the British Coal Industry*, 4 and 155; Hennessy, *Never Again*, 101-03; Kynaston, *A World to Build*, 190-200. The NCB took ownership of the industry on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1947.

<sup>722</sup> David Powell, *The Power Game: The struggle for coal*, London: Duckworth, 1993, 174 and 236; see also Ashworth, *the British Coal Industry*, 74-88.

<sup>723</sup> Though this is clearer with hindsight, the move away from coal had a number of contemporary indicators; Kenneth Morgan notes coal mining was the exception amongst otherwise expanding industrial production in the last two years of the 1950s (*The People's Peace*, 190).

<sup>724</sup> Ashworth, *the British Coal Industry*, 38, Powell, *The Power Game*, 177. The effect of contraction was initially mitigated by buoyancy in other industries and an activist regional policy from government; Morgan suggests ex-miners often obtained better-paid and safer employment in newer industries (*The People's Peace*, 190-91).

<sup>725</sup> In 1913, the peak year for British coal production, South Wales represented 22% of output, by 1947 it was 14% of a reduced total (<http://www.welshcoalmines.co.uk/>, accessed 5<sup>th</sup> November 2019; Ashworth, *the British Coal Industry*, 9). Middleton's claim that Wales was 'still the foundation of Britain's industrial power' was thus inaccurate, but in line with a sentimental treatment of the Herman myth ('The Pitmen's Painter', 142).

Such fundamental shifts in the industry, however, were unregistered and invisible when Herman returned to the figure of the miner as he prepared his lithographs for St George's Gallery Prints in 1960, nine years after he had left Ystradgynlais and as other subjects were coming to the fore in his work. Though speculative, it seems likely that, when first discussing a print project with Erskine, he was attracted to lithography through its democratising associations and saw *Two Miners* as an opportunity to restate one of his central ideas in a medium that would make it available to an extended audience.<sup>726</sup> Nonetheless, he also approached the expressive characteristics of the new medium with vigour. He had always been keen to position art as manual work and Stanley Jones has noted how he arrived at the Curwen Studio each day in overalls and workman's boots, focussed on a day's production.<sup>727</sup> As has been seen, his application succeeded in achieving within lithography the same simplified physical presence he had perfected in his painting and, in the colour version, getting from planes of ink the same inner-glow that he sought with washes of oil. His effort was thus aimed precisely, however, at recreating his existing and unchanging vision of the miner's symbolic meaning – at achieving his existing ends through different means. Moreover, as has been seen, this restatement of his conception of an unchanging essence in the figure of the miner came at the end of a decade in which the status of that figure had been complicated by changes to the industry and the wider economy; the centrality of the miner to a confident national narrative, unchallenged at the Festival of Britain was by this time less assured. If in 1951 his mining pictures had marked him as an artist in tune with his times, by the start of a new decade the personal and

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<sup>726</sup> Nini Herman hints at a slightly mercenary approach from Josef, noting the fashionability of artists' lithographs at the point he started work at the Curwen (N. Herman, *A Working Life*, 165).

<sup>727</sup> Stanley Jones, *Stanley Jones*, 86; for art as work, see N. Herman, *A Working Life*, 81.

imaginative nature of his vision was more exposed. This vision had always contained elements of nostalgia (even of sentimentality, as with the claim to the unconditional hospitality of the mining community) but its continuity in the face of historical change meant that with *Two Miners* such qualities had gained an additional clarity.<sup>728</sup>

When Michael Middleton profiled Herman in the *Studio* in 1953, he opened with a poetic description of the valley around Ystradgynlais and its interacting linear marks of natural and human activity: ‘The river, the road, and the railway, together with the canal, plait themselves up the valley ... terraced cottages snake over the hillsides, unwilling to break their continuity until forced to do so by rock or precipice’<sup>729</sup>. While Middleton’s prose suggested that these features were meaningful to Herman, they were not significant visual elements in his art. Indeed, this stress on the physical presence of homes and railway – on the way these defined and challenged the contours of the landscape – offered a closer description of the work of George Chapman whose markedly different portrayal of the South Wales coalfields, and specifically the Rhondda Valley, emerged after his first visit in that same year.<sup>730</sup> In contrast to Herman’s poetic vision of ‘walking monuments’, Chapman’s work emphasised topographic realism and details of the built environment, for one contemporary critic the reference points were the complex architectural perspectives of

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<sup>728</sup> For Herman’s nostalgia see Hyman, *The Battle for Realism*, 175. Single and paired miners continued to be the subject of prints in the following decade, notably in Anthony Currell’s 1963 series of drypoints for Editions Alecto.

<sup>729</sup> Middleton, *The Pitmen’s Painter*, 142.

<sup>730</sup> The Rhondda, lies around 30 km to the South East of Ystradgynlais, closer to the heart of the South Wales mining district. Though usually referred to in the singular, it is in fact two valleys, the larger Rhondda Fawr and the smaller Rhondda Fach which join at Porth. Chapman also produced images of surrounding villages and towns (and of Swansea) but with the Rhondda as his focus.

Canaletto and Piranesi.<sup>731</sup> His figures were intent on the mundane business of everyday life, with children, mothers and the elderly as prominent as miners, and though most pictures were built around some small human anecdote – simply stepping off a pavement or climbing a hill – their drama was largely in architecture and geology, with the streetscape experiencing sudden drops and steep rises imposed by the hills.<sup>732</sup> There was a contrast, too, in the two artists' practice within their respective locations. Although Herman sketched from life, his exhibited drawings and paintings were studio reinterpretations while many of his mining images, including the lithograph for Erskine, post-dated his move away from the village and utilised standard elements of his iconography drawn from memory.<sup>733</sup> Chapman, on the other hand, never lived in the coalfield, but made frequent trips to produce preliminary drawings or, in the case of his etchings, drew directly onto the plate while in location. Herman also envisioned coalface working as the essential experience of Ystradgynlais and sketched miners at work underground from soon after his arrival. Chapman, in contrast, depicted the Rhondda as somewhere shaped by mining but where the appearance and activity of the surface was equally characteristic (and he went down a mine just once, when work had halted due to a strike).<sup>734</sup> In the rest of this section, I develop this interpretation of Chapman's work, and its contrast with Herman's reach for an apparently

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<sup>731</sup> Rose, 'George Chapman's Rhondda Valley', 177.

<sup>732</sup> A good example of these characteristics amongst his work in oils (though lacking figures) is *View in Merthyr Tydfil* (to the North East of the Rhondda) which won the Gold Medal in the National Eisteddfod in 1957, illustrated in Lord, *Visual Culture of Wales*, 252.

<sup>733</sup> For Herman's drawing practice see Taylor, *Josef Herman*, 6. Herman said of his relationship to visual stimulus: 'I make only notes from nature, and draw and paint from memory; the subject is then a lost world that I recover. In this way one can get an approximation of reality without becoming realistic' (*Related Twilights*, 97).

<sup>734</sup> In the *Monitor* script, Chapman sees a future trip underground as an unfortunate necessity ('I am not looking forward to going down the mines. ... But it is something I shall have to do, because the production of coal underground is the main activity of the valleys' (Wheldon (ed.), *Monitor*, 172); his half-hearted delivery on this commitment is humorously described in a later reminiscence, 'First and Last Trip Below', published in Meyrick, *George Chapman*, 37.

timeless, metaphysical vision, looking in particular at the images of the *Rhondda Suite*, first exhibited at St George's Gallery Prints in August 1960. As noted, this contrast speaks to a well-rehearsed tension between an earlier modernist stress on permanence and an emerging aesthetics of the transitory, though in an idiosyncratic way characteristic of Erskine's publications.

In the autograph prose poem that was included as a bonus for anyone who purchased a full set of the *Rhondda Suite*, Chapman ascribed to the valleys' residents an equitable embrace of change: 'The married couples are busy buying their TV, bubble-cars and contemporary wallpapers, and the old people gossip and chatter without a trace of bitterness about the old days'.<sup>735</sup> A bubble-car also appeared in the visual depiction of the valleys, in *The First Building*, the final print of the series (Figure 85).<sup>736</sup> As an object particular to its time, the connotations of the bubble-car have become hard to interpret and Chapman's example here may just seem bizarre. He certainly seems to have meant the picture to be funny, with the small car labouring round an uphill bend just as a man enters the neighbouring public toilet (the print is named after a gentlemen's toilet whose entrance is visible on the left). However, this should not obscure other available meanings – in 1960 the bubble-car could also be fashionable, a sign of modernity rather than nostalgia. Certainly, Chapman was careful in his representation of a recognisable model: a Heinkel

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<sup>735</sup> The text was reproduced in the catalogue for the launch exhibition (*George Chapman*, St George's Gallery Prints, unpaginated); this segment was reused in Chapman's *Monitor* narration (Wheldon (ed), *Monitor*, 171).

<sup>736</sup> My ordering of the prints is based on the launch exhibition catalogue (*George Chapman*, exhibition catalogue, unpaginated). The placing of *Across the Valley* and *The Valley Gets Deeper* as the fourth and fifth images suggests an increasing physical penetration of the Rhondda, but there are no other signs of a narrative behind the ordering.



Kabine, with its curved glass cockpit and distinctive tail housing (Figure 90). The car shown was likely to have been brand new (and understood as such) since although the Kabine was launched in 1956, it was only in 1960 that a right-hand drive variant became available.<sup>737</sup> The popularity of bubble-cars was one element in a wider upsurge in private car ownership with registrations doubling between 1955 and 1958, while car ownership was itself one of the more obvious signs of new consumer opportunities and of the British population's embrace of their promise of personal freedom.<sup>738</sup> One trigger for this growth had been the abolition of petrol rationing in May 1950, although one specific attraction of the bubble-car was its fuel efficiency, a factor that became more salient as petrol price inflation worsened after the Suez crisis (there had even been a brief reintroduction of rationing in 1956-57).<sup>739</sup> The bubble-car in Chapman's image was thus an unexpectedly complex symbol. It could signify a degree of affluence and an interest in individual consumer possibilities within the Rhondda. However, it might also bring to mind the vulnerabilities of British oil supply routes which Suez had exposed, a point which was already being made by advocates of the coal industry as it contracted in the face of petro-chemical competition.

The bubble-car in *The First Building* – and the delivery van a little further up the street – were the only vehicles on the roads of the *Rhondda Suite*, making their presence all the more striking. However, various bits of static street furniture cropped up repeatedly in

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<sup>737</sup> This was built under licence in Britain as the Trojan 200 (Mark Hebert, *Bubble-Cars: a concise history*, Edinburgh: MacKenzie and Storrie, 1997, unpaginated).

<sup>738</sup> Barry Curtis, "'A highly Mobile and Plastic Enviorn'", Chris Stephens and Katherine Stout (eds), *Art & the 60s/ This Was Tomorrow*, London: Tate Publishing, 2004, 49.

<sup>739</sup> Harold Perkin, *The Age of the Automobile*, Brighton: Edward Everett Root, 2016, 206; Hebert, *Bubble-Cars*, unpaginated. A three-wheeled car was also cheaper to tax.

the images. The strong vertical up-thrusts of telegraph poles provided a man-made marker of scale for vertically stacked terraces and more distant natural peaks (providing a striking feature in *Pigeon Huts*, for example, Figure 80). The poles were mostly shown without connecting wires (whether for telephone or electricity) though in *The First Building* they support thin, interconnecting lines (as they do in some of Chapman's other etchings from the period).<sup>740</sup> In all cases, however, they were a physical embodiment of the Rhondda's increasing connectivity with a wider world of modern services, a notable contrast to Herman's occasional squat, non-functional telegraph poles.<sup>741</sup> Similar verticals could be supplied by prominent, decorative street lamps, as in *Waiting for a Bus, May 6<sup>th</sup> 1960* (Figure 82) and *Across the Valley* (Figure 83). The second of these, in particular, showed what was visibly a former gas lamp, with a cross-bar fitted for the lamplighter's ladder as well as a distinct rightward lean from age. It was difficult to tell from the print if the lamp was still in use (implying retrofitting for electricity) but in any event it was, again, a visible reminder of change and not just in the appearance of the street but in how coal – the reason for the Rhondda's development – had been used. Gas street lights had been fuelled by town gas, manufactured by baking coal. Electricity, too, was largely coal-derived but now via intermediating steam turbines. Indeed, in a context where overall demand was shrinking, electricity generation had increasingly become coal's main use.

The prominence given to specific symbols of recent and continuing change in the *Rhondda Suite* – whether new cars or outmoded street lamps – might be interpreted as

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<sup>740</sup> See for example *Treorchy*, 1958, illustrated in Meyrick, *George Chapman*, 31.

<sup>741</sup> See, for example, Herman's ink drawing *Street with Telegraph Poles* (1944-45) illustrated in Duchon, *Josef Herman*, Plate 71.

establishing a contrast with the wider setting, that of an established community, represented by old houses among far older hills. In fact, however, settlement in the Rhondda was exceptional for the recency and speed of its growth and for the extent of its subsequent contraction, even within the context of the South Wales coalfield.<sup>742</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century a sparse population had been primarily employed in agriculture (which could still intrude, as witnessed by the wandering sheep in *Waiting for a Bus, May 6<sup>th</sup> 1960*). By 1871, numbers in the two valleys had reached just under 24,000 and in the following forty years, as deep mines were sunk, this grew six-fold to exceed 150,000, peaking at 167,000 in 1923-24.<sup>743</sup> In the period from 1879 to the First World War nearly 20,000 houses were built, meaning that most Rhondda homes dated to these years.<sup>744</sup> Viewed with this knowledge, the emphasis on change in the *Rhondda Suite* can be seen to run through all of its prominent, carefully depicted architectural features. For example, unlike in valleys to the north, where a mix of houses had been built around earlier industries such as iron-working, in the Rhondda building had largely occurred within the framework of late-Victorian development control, enforcing standardisation; the regularity of its long streets (a major feature of *Across the Valley* or *The Valley Gets Deeper*, Figure 84) was a sign of the speed at which towns and villages had been created and an indicator of their relative recency.<sup>745</sup> Thus, while Chapman's townscapes were animated by figures (such as the girl on a scooter in *The Valley Gets Deeper* or the idling men in *Waiting for a Bus*, two in a bored take on

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<sup>742</sup> A historian of the area, Malcolm J. Fisk, notes that 'The story of the Rhondda is, in many respects, unique, since the speed of growth and decline are probably unequalled' (*Housing in the Rhondda 1800 – 1940*, Cardiff: Merton Priory Press, 1996, 7).

<sup>743</sup> E.D. Lewis, *The Rhondda Valleys: a study in industrial development, 1800 to the present day*, London: Phoenix House, 1963, 230; Fisk, *Housing in the Rhondda*, 8.

<sup>744</sup> Fisk, *Housing in the Rhondda*, 116.

<sup>745</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 and 115-16; byelaws did not prevent overcrowding or poor sanitation.

Herman's crouch) it was his buildings that gave an external, physical embodiment to the abstract socio-cultural forces that these individuals inhabited, whether those of economic boom or bureaucratic control.

Contraction in the Rhondda had been equally abrupt and well underway by the time Chapman was at work. The area lost one third of its population between 1921 and 1951, with further shrinkage taking the total to 100,000 by 1960.<sup>746</sup> The reason was straightforward: falls in employment following the closure of a number of uneconomic or worked-out mines.<sup>747</sup> In 1947, the NCB inherited twenty pits in the two valleys but started an immediate programme of closures and, while new investment later reopened Maerdy Colliery, the overall trajectory continued downward: to twelve pits in 1957 and seven in 1961.<sup>748</sup> In Chapman's depiction of the valleys, however, Industrial decline was not a significant emphasis. One exception might be the salience given to older or non-working men in both *Waiting for a Bus* and *Old Men at Gossip* (Figure 81) while, as discussed, the presence of bubble-car and street-lamp intimate coal's complex, changing relevance in the wider economy.<sup>749</sup> More prominent, however, were suggestions of a different direction of change: the emergence of a consumer society focussed on individualised needs and pleasures, the antithesis of Herman's perception of an innate collectivism within the mining community.

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<sup>746</sup> Ibid., 10; John May, *Rhondda 1203 – 2003*, Cardiff: Castle Publications, 2003, 50. In his accompanying prose poem (included as an additional impression for those buying the full suite) Chapman gave a population figure of 106,000 with 6,000 working below ground (Meyrick, *George Chapman*, 1945).

<sup>747</sup> There was some compensatory growth in light industry but even in the late 1950s mining remained the dominant source of male employment.

<sup>748</sup> May, *Rhondda*, 49-51.

<sup>749</sup> The only working miners depicted in the suite are two figures amongst those adorning the right hand margin of the *Introduction Print* (Figure 86).

While this theme has already been noted in relation to the bubble-car in *The First Building*, its most overt manifestation was in the television aerials shown lashed to chimneys (in *Pigeon Huts* and *Across the Valley*) or even atop a free-standing backyard pole (as in *Old Men at Gossip*).<sup>750</sup> These complex, spindly assemblies were a combination of early H and X aerials and newer horizontal arrays, and in the prints they provided an attenuated linear element that contrasted with both the strong, street-based verticals of telegraph poles and the dark masses of walls and hills.<sup>751</sup> In 1960, television was still a recent addition to the cultural possibilities of the Rhondda. Reception had first become available in 1952 and was extended to a two-channel offer only in January 1958 when a new commercial station, *Television Wales and the West*, was launched.<sup>752</sup> At a national level, the impact of television on working-class communities was profound. Those who owned a television watched for an average of fifteen hours per week while evening visiting fell away, along with trips to the cinema and participation in sport or politics.<sup>753</sup> Even the traditional layout of the house was altered as the rarely-used front parlour – lying behind the windows of Chapman’s single-fronted facades – became the well-used TV lounge. It was also highly contentious. A strong current in academic cultural thinking in the 1950s combined a left alignment in politics with a belief in the value of traditional culture, whether high culture or the rooted mores of the

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<sup>750</sup> Aerials were also a prominent feature of other Welsh work by Chapman such as *Treorchy* (1958) or *Terraced Houses, Swansea* (late 1950s) (illustrated in Meyrick, *George Chapman*, 29 and 31). They were a feature of his work noted by Louis McIntosh in 1956 (‘George Chapman’, 6).

<sup>751</sup> There is a useful discussion of early aerial types at <https://www.vintage-radio.net/forum/showthread.php?t=14665>, accessed 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

<sup>752</sup> May, *Rhondda*, 50 and 52.

<sup>753</sup> *Popular Culture and Personal Responsibility. Verbatim report of a conference held at Church House Westminster, 26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> October, 1960*, London: National Union of Teachers, 1960, 167; Joe Moran, *Armchair Nation*, London: Profile Books, 2013, 114; Kynaston, *Family Britain*, 50 and 108; Hennessy, *Having it So Good*, 537.

working class; television was seen to threaten both.<sup>754</sup> The classic statement of such a position was made by Richard Hoggart in *The Uses of Literacy*, first published in 1957 and issued as a Pelican paperback in 1958. Here a working-class tradition that was both rich and diverse, and yet shared and rooted, was cast as retreating before an emerging culture for which television was the mid-wife. This new culture was lost in immediate, shallow satisfactions with the promise of more to come: ‘an infinite perspective of increasingly “good times” – technicolour TV, all-smelling, all-touching, all-tasting TV’.<sup>755</sup> Hoggart’s concern that something was being lost in a hasty replacement of varied earlier cultures with a singular and commercial mass culture found an echo among a wider constituency of educators. In 1960, the National Union of Teachers (NUT) held a special conference on ‘Popular Culture and Personal Responsibility’ that was framed by a presidential address anxious about ‘a deteriorating standard of values’ in modern media, and that included critiques from leading academics of the mass media in general and television in particular.<sup>756</sup>

Chapman’s suite was published two months before the NUT conference and an anxiety about the impact of television might have been understood from the way the images depicted the Rhondda townscape. All had an insistent sense of the vertical, of an upward reach whereby human objects challenge natural grandeur, but in the three that feature television aerials that aspiration now ended in the bathos of odd-shaped metal struts. In

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<sup>754</sup> These new voices in academia and their left Leavisism are discussed in Hewison, *Culture and Consensus*, 113-15.

<sup>755</sup> Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 155 (and see also 153-54).

<sup>756</sup> *Popular Culture and Personal Responsibility*, 1. The NUT president was S. W. Exworthy. Panels were held on cinema and other media as well as television (the later addressed by Dr Hilde Himmelweit who discussed an inverse correlation between screen time and child intelligence). The panels were neither simplistic nor uniformly condemnatory, with that on art and design chaired by Herbert Read and addressed by Richard Hamilton. See also Hewison, *Culture and Consensus*, 129-30.

*Pigeon Huts* and, in particular, *Old Men at Gossip*, the aerials' height dominated the time-honoured activities of hobbies or talk. Moreover, in these and the other prints, the sky was full of vigorous striations, scratched on the etching plate, that might suggest the valley's 'seventy five inches of rain' but perhaps also the television signals that brought a new and external culture into the otherwise self-contained and hill-bound streets.<sup>757</sup> Nonetheless, such interpretations rest on no more than hints while the realist flavour of Chapman's work, with its emphasis on foreground detail, suggests that the aerials are primarily a physical presence that is simply registered with documentary precision (much as, in the accompanying prose poem, the new 'T.V.' purchased by the valleys' married couples is mentioned matter-of-factly).<sup>758</sup> This is not to be naïve in interpretation (Chapman has, of course, selected his subjects and the details he represents) but it is to recognise that change was a theme in the *Rhondda Suite* because it was a visual fact of the Rhondda townscape – its houses, its aerials – and that Chapman rendered this in a style emphasising visual reality with minimal clues to any comment or intended response.

Earlier, I noted how a shared subject matter –the South Wales mining community – formed an obvious point of connection between Herman and Chapman and, more specifically, between the work that each produced for St George's Gallery Prints. The interpretations of these images that I have subsequently developed suggest that in both cases place was itself used as a way to reflect on time, though in very different ways:

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<sup>757</sup> Quotation from Chapman's prose poem to accompany the suite (Meyrick, *George Chapman*, 45).

<sup>758</sup> *Ibid.*, 45. The height of aerials probably reflected poor reception in the South Wales valleys (Moran, *Armchair Nation*, 33).

Herman striving for his perception of the timeless; Chapman mediating the visual realities of change. Moreover, in each case the approach to time led to a tension with the print technique used, though the direction of this tension was reversed between the two. Herman employed colour lithography that had a relatively short history as a medium for fine art in Britain and had come to prominence quite suddenly after 1945 (as discussed in *Chapter One*). There was thus an irony in his adoption of it in the service of a vision that, in the case of *Two Miners*, sought the apparently timeless truths of labour from the time-bound specificities of post-war South Wales and that resulted in an image that was, as I've argued, essentially nostalgic. Etching, on the other hand, had been the pre-eminent medium for artists' printmaking from the later nineteenth century to the early 1930s and still carried residual connotations of an old-fashioned conservatism. In the *Rhondda Suite*, however, Chapman utilised a different quality of the medium, its capacity to reproduce a sketch made directly from life onto a prepared plate. He discussed this method in the BBC film of 1961, but it was already signalled by the prints themselves in their quick, rigorous line – almost a scribble in the shaded areas.<sup>759</sup> His etched line thus provided a warrant for the pictures as transcriptions of first-hand observation, for their claim to offer a realist depiction of a contemporary, changing community.

It was the description of features through line that also underpinned the particular affectionate-yet-detached quality that, I would suggest, can be found in the *Rhondda Suite* images. Their careful observation indicated an affinity with the subject matter, something

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<sup>759</sup> Wheldon (ed.), *Monitor*, 169; see also Meyrick, *George Chapman*, 13 and 16 (Meyrick notes the plates were finished in the studio; the bubble-car in *The First Building* being reduced in size, for example).



also suggested by the details of their human anecdotes whether a child racing or an old man at gossip. At the same time, their careful representation, via the etching needle, connoted a degree of distance, of control, matched in the dominance of human activity by its architectural setting. Chapman's decision to depict a largely working-class location might be considered an example of the resurgent social-realist current in British art in the preceding years associated with the 'kitchen sink' painters.<sup>760</sup> However, the strong sense of detachment in the prints could also have been associated with the rising status of social research at this time whereby new and apparently objective methods for surveying communities promised social improvements and, more immediately, a way in which to consider working class communities that avoided subjective assertions about culture in the manner of Hoggart.<sup>761</sup> Both these contexts opened possible interpretations of the prints at the time of their publication. However, Chapman himself preferred to characterise his Rhondda work through the metaphor of a novel (bringing the individual anecdotes of the various pictures together as a single, comprehensive entity, of which the multi-part print suite might thus be seen as a microcosm). He noted that, as he 'started to observe what was happening around me in the actual villages', he was reading William Faulkner's novels of Yoknapatawpha County and came to conceive of a similar 'visual novel of the mining valleys concentrated entirely on the life that is going on there and describing everything the people are doing'.<sup>762</sup> Observation and description were thus key terms in Chapman's own

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<sup>760</sup> Robert Meyrick makes a connection between Chapman's work in the Rhondda and pictures by John Bratby, Derrick Greaves, Edward Middleditch and Jack Smith (given the 'kitchen-sink' label in 1954) as well as Joan Eardley and L.S. Lowry (*George Chapman*, 10). The aesthetic of Chapman's paintings is similar, though colour and a fairly thick application of paint puts less emphasis on the observer's cool visual analysis.

<sup>761</sup> Savage, *Identities and Social Change*, 19-20.

<sup>762</sup> Wheldon, *Monitor*, 170.

explanation of his ambition and they captured something of the visual character found in the *Rhondda Suite*, aligning with the affectionate-yet-detached quality detected above. This character might be described as a ‘secular realism’ in that the images depicted a world of apparent visual facts, limited to a particular temporal moment, which was offered as complete in itself, invoking no wider framework of interpretation or value (and this remains true despite his evident novelistic shaping of scenes).<sup>763</sup> Such a conception of Chapman’s approach summarises both its contrast with Herman’s rich reimagining of Ystradgynlais – in pursuit of an apparently timeless, quasi-spiritual symbolism – and its distance from the social critique of contemporary cultural change associated with figure such as Hoggart.

An understanding of Chapman’s work in terms of such a secular realism also draws attention to how the images of the suite registered features of a changing world at the start of the 1960s – in particular an expanding consumer culture and mass communication – but without a radical rupture with existing styles. In this, a further contrast can be drawn for the *Rhondda Suite*, this time with the emergent Pop Art printmaking that would achieve critical prominence in the following decade. I give such work further consideration in the *Conclusion*. In particular, I assess the claim of some subsequent art historical writing that the strategies employed by the new work effected a radical reassessment of prints’ potential, and the way that they communicated, that confirmed the inadequacy of earlier artists’ printmaking.

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<sup>763</sup> I owe elements of this idea to Jay Bernstein’s analysis of work by Pieter de Hooch, though Bernstein uses the phrases ‘materialist realism’ and, for de Hooch’s subject, ‘secular world’ (‘Wax, Brick and Bread: Philosophy and Painting’, Dana Arnold and Margaret Iversen (eds), *Art and Thought*, Oxford: Blackwell: 2003, 45-47 and passim).

Whatever the innovations of the 1960s, however, the history and publications of St George's Gallery Prints demonstrate that activity in Britain at the turn of that decade was not restricted to waiting for or anticipating developments to come. It is true that Erskine introduced new, professional approaches to print production and retailing that were necessary conditions for what followed. Moreover, such operational moves towards the fine-art mainstream were matched by an emphasis, in at least some of his publications, on themes central to the development of modern art, shifting the centre of gravity of printmaking towards that of the wider art field. However, his activity and publications also continued features of earlier post-war printmaking, despite his reputation as a conduit to the future. Erskine expressed (and bequeathed) a continuing uncertainty about whether artists' printmaking embraced or rejected aspirations for democratising art ownership. Further, his roster of artists primarily comprised those who had achieved a reputation earlier in the post-war period (or before) and who brought to their images existing concerns. This did not mean, however, that the resulting prints were simply outmoded or should fail to merit contemporary attention. Rather, the relationship to their own moment of production was complex and repays historically-informed consideration as, I hope, has been demonstrated through the three examples in this chapter: Evans' late but considered reflection on primitivism; Herman's metaphysical aspirations towards timelessness but also his more immediate nostalgia; and Chapman's secular realism, pointing to concerns of the art of the following decade but in an individual and idiosyncratic way.

## CONCLUSION

### SEEING POST-WAR ARTISTS' PRINTS

In the *Introduction* to this thesis, I set out as one of its central claims that printmaking in the years from 1945 to 1960 was richer and more varied than established narratives in art and print history allow. I also noted that an element in several such narratives is a contrast drawn between post-war printmaking and, in Andrea Rose's words, 'the 1960s onwards, the boom years'. In itself, the idea of an upsurge in printmaking activity in the 1960s can cast a backward shadow, making the preceding period harder to see. For example, Carey and Griffiths' account of a move from late 1940s fragility to 1960s professionalism in the institutions supporting print production is largely accurate (though the preceding chapters have added nuance) but such an emphasis leads to neglect of those print images that were made after 1945 and their interpretative potential. Moreover, other writing about art and prints in the 1960s has overtly denigrated the products and activities of the preceding years and done so in order to celebrate ideas about the nature and value of printed images associated with the later decade. In this conclusion, therefore, I too turn attention to the 1960s – and to ways in which that decade has subsequently been interpreted – but do so in order to complete my argument against those critical trends that have devalued prints from the fifteen years after 1945.

In the paragraphs that follow, I critique two ideas in particular. The first relates specifically to printmaking and claims that innovations in imagery (specifically the introduction of elements from other kinds of printed information, outside fine art) moved prints from the periphery to the centre of artistic practice. In doing so, it is asserted, the

new prints demonstrated the inadequacy of previous work, in particular that of the immediately preceding period. The second relates to art democratisation, another of my central themes in the thesis. The claim is, again, that new approaches to democratisation in the 1960s rendered previous thinking and activities irrelevant. As a consequence post-war prints, that were associated with those activities, themselves become positioned as outmoded and uninteresting. Both of the ideas I discuss are connected with interpretations of British Pop Art, and as a reference point for their explanation I begin my discussion with a brief consideration of Richard Hamilton's 1967 screenprint, *I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas*. At the end of the *Conclusion*, after assessing these new ideas arising in or applied to the 1960s, I finish by reflecting on some of the aspects of post-war printmaking that can be seen if it is moved out of the shadow of the 1960s.

By deriving *I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas* from a film still, Richard Hamilton established a starting point that his treatment could then complicate (Figure 91). In a standard Pop Art move, the image's central portrait of Bing Crosby asserted the claim of commercial culture on fine art. The portrait also, though, signalled a distance from its source material and an awareness of the reproductive technology that made Hollywood productions possible: Crosby's face was rendered as a negative image, like an exposed film still, giving an uncanny likeness rather than a realistic one. Further, the tones in the face and their extension to the surrounding walls implied a film in monochrome, yet Crosby's yellow cardigan suggested the artificial palette of colour movies. Hamilton's reference to both (old-fashioned) black-and-white and (modern) technicolour thus offered an allusion to the

combination of nostalgic content and technical innovation that was an element of contemporary American cinema and, in particular, *White Christmas*, the colour film of 1954 from which the still was taken. It was a film that included Irving Berlin's wistful title song alongside the boast of being the first film shot in VistaVision.<sup>764</sup>

With some irony, Berlin's song was itself an object of nostalgia by 1954, a point manifested in the way the film reprised Crosby's own first performance of it in *Holiday Inn*, a black and white film from 1942. The way Hamilton's image hesitated between monochrome and colour could thus also be understood as referencing this ability of commercial culture to repeat and reinvent its own content, pointing to different iterations of Crosby's performance.<sup>765</sup> Moreover, Hamilton paralleled such reinvention in his own alterations to the original film-still. At first glance, these appeared to appropriate the movie image to the traditions of visual art and the contemporary avant-garde: the photographic quality of Crosby's face being offset by painterly marks – swirls in the ceiling, smudges and splatters to his right – which reintroduced the artist's manual gestures and referenced the techniques of Abstract Expressionism. Yet as a screenprint, it was clear that such apparent traces of the artist's active hand had themselves been replicated via the silkscreen.<sup>766</sup> Hamilton's print thus refused to offer any mark as simply natural, to be accepted at face value, and eroded the separation of photo-reproduction from original print.

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<sup>764</sup> VistaVision was a proprietary film format of Paramount Pictures that gave high resolution and enabled wide-screen projection. Crosby's cardigan in the film is, in fact, a deep brown.

<sup>765</sup> That the print successfully suggests a film from 1942 as much as 1954 is witnessed by the misattribution of its source to *Holiday Inn* (see, for example, Beaumont-Jones, *A Century of Prints*, 24, and the label of a linked print in Auckland Art Gallery, <https://www.aucklandartgallery.com/explore-art-and-ideas/artwork/4207/im-dreaming-of-a-black-christmas>, accessed 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020).

<sup>766</sup> See Appendix 1 for an explanation of printmaking techniques.

The type of practices utilised by Hamilton are referenced by Julia Beaumont-Jones in her claim that from the mid-1960s, as British printmaking was reaching ‘full stride’, the ‘old distinctions between commercial and fine art processes soon diminished as the inherent syntax of print became a subject in its own right’.<sup>767</sup> Though a passing remark in Beaumont-Jones’ commentary from 2017, the idea that artists’ prints had become an investigative tool for probing the language – the ‘syntax’ – of printed images more broadly, and the suggestion that this represented a fulfilment of their modern role, had become an established critical maxim through earlier and more extensive treatment, notably in a 1981 essay by Richard Field.<sup>768</sup> Writing primarily about the period from 1960, Field’s focus was on the US but he suggested that a concurrent realisation of prints’ potential occurred in Britain, with Hamilton and Paolozzi venerated as pioneers. His argument was that, prior to this self-reflexive turn, printmaking had been a mere artistic parasite. Earlier prints – such as those considered in this study – simply reproduced the forms of drawing or painting (whatever the claims to originality of a particular image) and hence the medium as a whole ‘lacked intrinsic content’.<sup>769</sup> However, as modern society became inundated with a ‘flood of visual imagery’, only an art that was ‘willing to appropriate the structure, methods and style of mass media’ could adequately reflect contemporary life.<sup>770</sup> As the task of art thus became the examination of ‘the various visual languages by which we represent reality to ourselves’,

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<sup>767</sup> Beaumont-Jones, *A Century of Prints*, 16 also quoted in my Introduction. Pat Gilmour uses Hamilton to illustrate a similar argument that 1960s printmakers placed mass communication and print process ‘at the very heart of meaning’ (*The Mechanised Image*, 14).

<sup>768</sup> Richard S. Field, ‘Contemporary Trends’, Michel Melot, Anthony Griffiths, Richard S. Field and Andre Beguin, *Prints: History of an Art*, Geneva: Skira, 1981, 188-232.

<sup>769</sup> Field, ‘Contemporary Trends’, 190.

<sup>770</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

prints were the ideal means to interrogate the codes and structures of the new mass imagery precisely because they shared its reproductive nature: 'the modern print entered into a synergistic relationship with the entirety of its own class of objects: printed information'.<sup>771</sup> Printmaking was thus brought to the very centre of the artistic field so that, as the 1960s began, there was already evidence that printmaking had 'sprung loose from its role subordinate to painting or sculpture'.<sup>772</sup> A print could juxtapose the sensual against the symbolic or representational, and in doing so estrange us from 'the conventions, codes, and systems which we blithely accept' as if they were consonant with reality.<sup>773</sup>

Much about this argument fails to stand up to scrutiny. Field invokes the idea of 'visual language' and a set of analytical terms related to language ('structure', 'code' and 'system') but the former remains a loose metaphor and the latter are imprecise. As a result, exactly what it is that artists' prints are telling us about visual communication remains unclear (a problem inherited by Beaumont-Jones, where the metaphor of 'print syntax' has some general suggestiveness but obscures detail, there is nothing about prints that corresponds to the rule-governed process of word ordering that comprises linguistic syntax). Moreover, when Field invokes specific printmakers to illustrate his favoured approach, their work is used as little more than an illustration to the commonplace assertion that visual representation – like language – relies on conventional symbols. My point here, however, is not to criticise the adequacy of Field's theorising or the prints that he champions as an end in itself. Indeed, as has been seen in the discussion of Hamilton's work, the kind of media-

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<sup>771</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>772</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>773</sup> Ibid., 188.



aware printmaking from the 1960s that Field endorsed could offer interesting interpretive possibilities. Rather, I want to rebut the idea that it was only such printmaking that was adequate to its time, and that it somehow superseded all previous activity. Contra Field, it does not follow from the spread of reproductive imagery in society that only an art addressing its techniques is of value. This is simply a preference asserted as an absolute. Further, it is not the case that sharing a reproductive mode with such mass images of itself makes artists' prints, more than any other medium, suited to offer a commentary on them; nor, for that matter, is it clear that artists' prints do, in fact, share essential characteristics with such material, being produced in a studio and sold as a limited edition through a gallery. Without such a connection, the assertion that an exploration of mass visual communication is somehow an imperative for artists' prints falls. Such weaknesses in Field's propositions matter for this thesis because they are the basis for his explicit denigration of earlier approaches and because their effect has been to valorise a certain kind of self-reflexive modernist print at the expense of others, buttressing a modern canon and denying attention to alternative types of printmaking, in particular to work made in the immediately preceding period. The value of a print such as Hamilton's can be recognised without supporting such dogmatism.

In the next few paragraphs, I move on to trace how the discourse of art democratisation showed both continuity during the 1960s. As with Field's commentary on innovations in subject matter, new approaches to democratisation have again been taken to undermine the legitimacy of previous activity. However, an understanding of how these new approaches were themselves specific to their own historical moment gives a wider

view, and one within which the value of earlier efforts, and the strength of their continuing legacy, can be better appreciated.

Robert Erskine's half-regretful, somewhat self-serving aside about increasing print prices – 'I suppose that's what I was aiming to bring about' – was made in *A Decade of Printmaking*, a collection of essays published to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the publisher Editions Alecto. Alecto had been founded in 1962 and the ten years reviewed thus covered the high days of the 1960s print boom. As with Erskine's comment, however, the tone of the essays as a whole was less assured than the idea of a boom might imply. One of the company's original directors, Joe Studholme, wrote how 'the fundamental situation in the print world has changed remarkably little' despite the 'razzmatazz' that surrounded department store 'graphics galleries' and new print outlets at international art dealers.<sup>774</sup> Studholme saw no transformatory influx of young consumers and a market that remained small and cliquy. Although journalistic commentary could give a different impression by talking up the presence of youthful buyers, this writing itself remained stuck within tired 'pictures for the poor' tropes – with prints assigned a low status – despite the decade's print price inflation.<sup>775</sup>

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<sup>774</sup> Studholme, 'The Second Decade', 95.

<sup>775</sup> Thus, for example, the subtitle of Jan Gillies, 'How to Break into Print', *Daily Mail*, 28 May 1969, 16, describes the form as 'for people who can't afford to be original'. The article is positive about prints, but positions them both as an affordable alternative for those who would otherwise buy paintings and as an investment.

For the editor of *A Decade of Printmaking*, Charles Spencer, such rising prices had also affected a more politically committed notion of democratisation through prints, making a ‘mockery of idealistic ambitions of a cheap art form for wider audiences’.<sup>776</sup> Nonetheless, this ideal was not something he felt should be simply abandoned as outdated. Rather, Spencer saw Editions Alecto itself as continuing to deliver ‘a new social role for art’ and he articulated this role with conviction. Appealing to the traditions of both William Morris and Russian Constructivism, he asserted the value of an artwork which ‘reaches the largest potential audience’ (having been made ‘inexpensive’ by multiplication) and thus ‘penetrates into daily life and behaviour’.<sup>777</sup> Although Spencer was not simply repeating the rhetoric of the *Everyman Prints* unmodified (in view of rising prices he wisely framed the audience in terms of ‘a major section of the community’ rather than ‘every purse’) nonetheless there was a consistency in the fundamental ideal: lower prices achieved through multiplication and for social ends.<sup>778</sup> As has been shown in the preceding chapters, this was a position whose centrality to the printmaking field had fluctuated, but that had had a continuous presence through the 1940s and 1950s. It had evidently survived the price inflation of the print boom to be projected by Spencer into the 1970s.

For other commentators, too, the idea of prints as a democratising medium retained relevance, though they might be more suspicious of the intentions of Editions Alecto. Writing in *New Society* in 1967, Benedict Nightingale named Alecto as among

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<sup>776</sup> Spencer, ‘A Decade of Printmaking’, 10

<sup>777</sup> *Ibid.*, 14. In these quotations, Spencer is referring to 3-D ‘multiples’, produced as an extension of the idea of print.

<sup>778</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

publishers pushing prints' potential for financial speculation rather than democratisation (and he described the print boom as a boom in prices and nothing more). The one cited exception was Curwen Prints, who avoided suites and produced a number of unlimited editions as part of a strategy to ensure affordability: "We don't believe in high prices at all", an unnamed executive was quoted as saying, "Our basic philosophy is that original prints should be available to quite ordinary people".<sup>779</sup>

By emphasising how the existing ideal of democratisation continued to be cited across the 1960s, I do not mean to deny the reality of change in the printmaking field. The second series of Guinness Lithographs in 1962, for example, maintained the tradition of large-edition popular prints (described in *Chapter One*) but also marked its close.<sup>780</sup> However, I do want to counter the contention that this ideal had already simply run its course in the early 1950s, retreating before a strictly 'fine art' approach to making and retailing artists' prints (a point already made in *Chapter Two*). Moreover, registering this continuity rebuts any simple historical narrative in which cultural attitudes embodying post-war welfarism gave way to new ideas and to a new art that found full realisation in the 1960s. Instead, a comprehensive account of democratisation as an idea in post-war printmaking alerts us to the complexity of chronology and periodisation. On the one hand, earlier chapters have evidenced a degree of continuity that straddled the war: the flowering

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<sup>779</sup> Nightingale, 'A Licence to Print Originals', 207. The Curwen Press established Curwen Prints as a publisher for some of the work produced at the Curwen Studio (see Jones, *Stanley Jones*, 93). Felicity Schwarz of Editions Alecto is quoted as saying that a reduced price would not attract a sufficiently widened market. By this time the Curwen Press had established Curwen Prints as a publisher for some of the work produced at the Curwen Studio (see Jones, *Stanley Jones*, 93).

<sup>780</sup> In addition, these were aimed primarily at distribution to pubs rather than sale to the public (see Emma Mason, *Who? When? Where? The Story of the Guinness Lithographs*, Eastbourne: Bread and Butter Press, 2016).

of democratising activity in the 1940s and 1950s had its immediate origins in the lithography of the 1930s (echoing the idea of a distinct intermodern period raised in the *Introduction*). On the other, however, the language of Spencer and Nightingale shows how there was no complete break on entering the 1960s. Rather, the same idea, modified and reframed for a new context, continued to motivate activity.

Within the literature on prints, commentary on democratisation as a historical phenomenon has tended to be dismissive, when not overtly hostile, seeing it as a wrong turning whose perceived failure is inevitable from the outset. Pat Gilmour, for example, has stated that it is ‘one of the sadder ironies’ that prints’ democratic potential is ‘more than outweighed by its potential as big business’.<sup>781</sup> In relation to mid-twentieth-century Britain, Frances Carey and Antony Griffiths claim that the market for prints ‘never responded favourably ... to attempts to democratize the commodity’. Referring back to Nightingale’s 1967 article, they state that publishers have preferred to rest their hopes ‘on the rock of institutions and wealthy collectors rather than the shifting sands of the interests of “quite ordinary people”’.<sup>782</sup> In some ways, the history described in this study (from Diana Uhlman’s harassed marketing of the *AIA 1951 Lithographs* to Robert Erskine’s concern that prints are too cheap for the market) ballasts that view, though it also complicates it, emphasising, for example, how limited-edition publishing was also marginal to art retailing with buyers as much from the broader middle class as ‘wealthy collectors’. Nonetheless, these dismissive

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<sup>781</sup> Gilmour, *The Mechanised image*, 22. Elsewhere Gilmour seems to find print’s very multiplicative capacity something of an embarrassment, as in her 15<sup>th</sup> November 1974 interview with Michael Rothenstein (Tate Library, TAV 38AB).

<sup>782</sup> Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Gard British Printmakers*, 23.

assertions also, I would suggest, betray a continuing nervousness on the part of historians about the implication of democratising narratives for printmaking's status within the wider artistic field. This is emphasised when, as in the work by Gilmour and Carey and Griffiths cited above, visible adherence to modernist stylistic traits is viewed as a marker of artistic seriousness, while democratisation is taken to imply aesthetically conservative images.<sup>783</sup> Indeed, during the 1960s themselves, while Spencer and Nightingale adhered to the traditional ideal of widening art ownership, other developments put the very meaning of democratisation in question and, as a result, the earlier democratising activities of Lyons, La Dell, and even Erskine, came to seem yet further from an evolving, but increasingly institutionally dominant, modernist mainstream.

Spencer's comments on the democratic intentions of Alecto related in part to a new product, the 'multiple', which used industrial techniques to extend multiplication to three-dimensional works. Not everyone was enamoured of this innovation, however. Rayner Banham, a prolific architectural and cultural critic, condemned multiples as being merely executive toys.<sup>784</sup> His issue was not just that their prices were relatively high, but that the whole concept of making an art object more widely available rested on what he regarded as an outmoded notion of both art and democracy, at least when that object was valued as the creative vision of an individual. Instead, Banham predicted new modes of participative cultural production that would embody democracy in their making ('the more open kind of

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<sup>783</sup> There can be a degree of inconsistency (or at least unacknowledged complexity) about the relationship between intended audience, taste and style: for example, the market of wealthy collectors for 1920s etchings is also widely seen as an aesthetically conservative force.

<sup>784</sup> Rayner Banham, 'The Aesthetics of the Yellow Pages', *New Society*, 1966, quoted in Gilmour, *The Mechanised Image*, 62.

democracy which a lot of people are fighting for') and from which entirely new, collective artistic forms would emerge.<sup>785</sup> This was a conception of democratisation not as sharing art more widely but as reinventing it. It sought to undercut the authority of traditional artistic forms, not only when viewed as conservative tokens of an elite culture, but also when considered as part of a common human inheritance that should be widely available. It was an approach that put in question the recent efforts of traditional art democratisers and it was widespread among the self-proclaimed radicals of the 1960s<sup>786</sup>

Nor was this politically radical perspective the only new understanding of democratisation that came into play in the decade. For the theorists associated with the Independent Group, notably Lawrence Alloway, it was the visual plenty arising from mass consumerism that had overturned the notion of an elite art.<sup>787</sup> The perceived achievement of British Pop artists was to express this idea through the appropriation of commercial imagery, their work being taken as democratic as a result of its deployment of the iconography of popular culture (as Hamilton uses a still from a Hollywood film in *I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas*). At the end of the 1960s, the catalogue for an Arts Council survey exhibition, *Pop Art Redefined*, looked to establish this democratising claim for its subject: 'Pop was a resistance movement: a classless commando which was directed against

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<sup>785</sup> Quoted in Mellor, *The Sixties Art Scene*, 190.

<sup>786</sup> Appleyard, *The Pleasures of Peace*, 197-203.

<sup>787</sup> Alloway's best known articulation of this position was in 'The Long Front of Culture', 1959, reprinted in Richard Kalina (ed.), *Imagining the Present: Context, Content, and the Role of the Critic*, London: Routledge: 2006.

the Establishment in general and the Art Establishment in particular. ... Pop in England was, as I have indicated, a facet of the class struggle, real or imagined'.<sup>788</sup>

The more established idea of extending access to art through the widened ownership of traditional forms, that had been manifested in various post-war printmaking activities, might be described as a welfare state culture approach to democratisation (to adopt the term discussed in *Chapters Two and Three*). A previously elite good was made more widely (though not universally) available, but without an overt challenge to existing structures of value. The new concepts of democratisation arising in the 1960s did not sweep this tradition away, but their self-proclaimed radicalism (whether political or aesthetic) did diminish its lustre, its claim to be an adequate response to modern, democratically-oriented social conditions. However, these innovations, too, should be subject to historical perspective. In relation to the embrace of iconography from popular culture, Simon Faulkner has itemised how Pop Art strategies depended on and entrenched the 'high/low divide' in art and culture rather than deconstructing it, relying on the prestige of high art institutions when mounting their 'commando' raids.<sup>789</sup> Despite Russell's rhetoric, Pop left the artistic field unreformed. Banham's notion of a cultural revolution ushering in participatory artistic production proved, if anything, more straightforwardly mistaken; the prophecy was erroneous and the idea tainted by the messy collapse of the utopianism of

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<sup>788</sup> John Russell and Suzi Gablik (eds), *Pop Art Redefined*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1969, 31-32. Despite the references to class-war, this interpretation of Pop art was not necessarily associated with the political left; as noted, Alloway's politics were centre-right.

<sup>789</sup> Simon Faulkner, 'British Pop Art and the High/Low Divide', Dana Arnold and David Peters Corbett (eds), *A Companion to British Art 1600 to the Present*, Chichester: Wiley, 2016, 156-179.



which it was part.<sup>790</sup> Thus, while it remains important to be clear about the modest impact of the 'welfare state' democratisation pursued within the post-war printmaking field, equally it was not merely a short-lived, capricious detour, nor should it be dismissed on the basis of later attitudes and reconceptualisations.

I have stressed that the perception of the post-war period as a time of institutional weakness in British printmaking has a factual basis. Overall, evidence suggests that the strength of the market was mixed, at best, notwithstanding the fashion for colour lithography, while there was an absence of professional facilities for artist printmakers and efforts at publication were largely ad hoc. However, as has been argued across this thesis, a belief that prints produced in the fifteen years after 1945 also offer little of interest reflects the partial and partisan position of much of the subsequent historiography of prints and of post-war British art more broadly. Teleological histories in which British art moves towards fulfilment in the movements of the 1960s (or a 1950s avant-garde) have cast the outputs of 'welfare state culture', and implicitly most prints of the period, as a foil – outdated even at the moment of their creation. Within print history, similar teleological narratives have tended to pick-out the Society of London Painter-Printers exhibition in 1948 along with Erskine's opening of St George's Gallery Prints in 1954 as the only events of note, misleadingly yoking the two together and valuing Erskine's venture solely – and in large part inaccurately – as foreshadowing developments in the following decade. As I have already discussed in this *Conclusion*, the elaboration in the print literature of tendentious – and

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<sup>790</sup> Appleyard, *The Pleasures of Peace*, 197-203; Hewison, *Culture and Consensus*, 148-58.

sometimes erroneous – ideas about the nature and value of printed images, and the association of these with styles that emerged or matured in the 1960s, has tended to cast the preceding period into shadow.

In addition to the claim that post-war printmaking was more rich and varied than established narratives have allowed, I made two further, connected claims in the *Introduction* to this study. One of these was that by removing the shadow of latter developments and giving individual print images from the period a historically informed attention, we can derive insights into post-war culture. My evidence to justify this proposition has been the interpretations of images offered across the preceding chapters. The other was that printmaking in these years continued to be marked by an ideal of democratisation. In large part, explicit consideration of this final theme has tended to be separate from my readings of images, related instead to the history of publishing institutions and activities such as those of the AIA or Robert Erskine (and I brought it to a conclusion, immediately above, by noting the ideals persistence among publishers and commentators in the 1960s). However, one post-war version of a democratising conception of prints – as addressing a broad, popular audience in alignment with the values of the welfare state – has provided the context for a number of the interpretations made, linking these two themes of the thesis. This can be traced, for example, from La Dell's image of family and reconstruction found in Lyons first series, through Lamb's revision of country house imagery in the service of Festival of Britain narratives of national unity, and on to Evans' use of prints' popular associations to highlight his own rejection of primitivist kitsch. The suggestion here is that the aspiration towards democratisation is one reason why prints addressed

contemporary cultural and political concerns in the way that they did. Equally, though, and in the reverse direction, the meanings made available by specific prints help deepen an appreciation of what it meant for printmaking to be a democratic form at this particular moment. The images of La Dell and Trevelyan made for the Festival of Britain, for example, convey the affective force of the Festival's narratives of family and inclusivity in a way that some of its written materials cannot, and in doing so they also establish some of the characteristics of tone that marked a democratising printmaking in 1951: reflective, but also optimistic, aligned with government agendas, but not related to specific policy (even if the latter might be touched on in Sellars' *Sheffield Steel*). Similarly, Jones' attempt to assert a particular conception of popular art in the face of more strident Coronation narratives provides a new perspective on that event, but also on how the subject of a print made for a wider (if in large part middle-class) audience could evolve in response to a changed national context. A print like Scott's *Busby* shows the wit that could result when the idea of a democratic form met an artist's developing abstract practice.

The post-war Britain that emerges from close looking at prints is familiar in its overall shape from existing histories, with an earnest culture in the late 1940s giving way to a nascent consumer society as the 1950s progressed. Yet, the particularity and detail of individual images can also reveal it in vivid ways, from the unexpected suggestion of wartime persecution in the 'teashop lithographs' published by Lyons in 1947 to the depiction of how television was changing the landscape of South Wales in Chapman's *Rhondda Suite* from 1960. Across this study, I have attempted to apply to post-war British prints some of the practices of contemporary art history and, more broadly, to interpret images within their

politico-cultural context and in relation to developments in the wider art field. I hope to have shown that, despite previous neglect, these prints can sustain such attention and that in response they reveal both new aspects of themselves and new perspectives on the period.

## SOURCES AND COLLECTIONS FOR ARTISTS' PRINTS

### Artists' Print Sources

Note: references to photo-reproductions include those in both electronic and hard copy.

Claude Rogers, *The Shot Tower from Somerset House*:

- viewed at the Victoria and Albert Museum, Prints and Drawings Study Room.

The Lyons Lithographs, 1947:

- viewed at the Victoria and Albert Museum, Prints and Drawings Study Room.

Prints exhibited at the Society of London Painter-Printers exhibition, 1948.

- Of the prints discussed in detail:
  - those by Prunella Clough, Matthew Smith and Graham Sutherland, viewed at the British Council Collection stores, East Acton;
  - that by Prunella Clough, viewed as a photo-reproduction.
- Of the other prints illustrated:
  - that by Victor Pasmore, viewed at the British Council Collection stores, East Acton;
  - others, viewed as photo-reproductions.

*Artists' International Association 1951 Lithographs*. For those prints discussed or illustrated:

- those by John Aldridge, James Boswell, Lynton Lamb, Stella Marsden, Laurence Scarfe, James Sellars, Julian Trevelyan and Fred Uhlman, viewed at Tate Archive;
- that by Edwin La Dell, viewed at Aberystwyth University School of Art Collection;
- those by Sheila Robinson, John Minton and Keith Vaughan, viewed as photo-reproductions;
- an additional impression of the Aldridge print, along with preparatory works, was viewed at the Fry Art Gallery, Saffron Walden.

*RCA Coronation Lithographs*:

- all images were viewed at the Royal College of Art print archive;
- an additional impression of the Rowntree print was viewed at the Fry Art Gallery, Saffron Walden;
- additional impressions of the Scott and Richards prints were viewed at the British Council Collection stores, East Acton.

Merlyn Evans, *Vertical Suite in Black*:

- *Helmet Mask, Standing Figure* and *Thunderbird* viewed at the Victoria and Albert Museum, Prints and Drawings Study Room;
- *Corn Ghost, Skull* and *Seed Pod* viewed as photo-reproductions.

Joseph Herman, *Two Miners*:

- viewed at the Tate, Prints and Drawings Rooms. George Chapman, the *Rhondda Suite*;
- viewed at Aberystwyth University School of Art Collection;
- an additional impression of *Pigeon Huts* was Viewed at the Fry Art Gallery, Saffron Walden.

Richard Hamilton, *I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas*:

- viewed as a photo-reproduction.

### **Artists' Print Collections**

A complete set of the first series of Lyons Lithographs, 1947, is held by the Victoria and Albert Museum.

A substantial subset of the works exhibited in the Society of London Painter-Printers exhibition, 1948, as well as other Miller's Press publications, is held by the British Council. Relevant impressions are also held by galleries in New Zealand (Auckland Art Gallery/ Toi O Tāmaki, Christchurch Art Gallery/ Te Puna O Waiwhetū and the Museum of New Zealand/ Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington) and Australia (National Gallery of Victoria). These are a result of bequests by Rex Nan Kivell, managing director of the Redfern Gallery.

The *AIA 1951 Lithographs* are not held as a comprehensive set by a public collection. Those now in Tate Archive formed part of the papers of the AIA, transferred after the organisation's dissolution in 1972 (and this is the rationale for their being held as archive material rather than within the print collection). A subset of the works are also held in the Arts Council Collection.

A set of the *RCA Coronation Lithographs* is held by the RCA Print Archive (see Appendix 6).

Merlyn Evans, *Vertical Suite in Black* is not held as a set by a public collection. Three of the six images are held by the Victoria and Albert Museum, as shown above.

A complete set of George Chapman, the *Rhondda Suite* is held in the Aberystwyth University School of Art Collection (including more than one impression of some images). The set includes impressions printed by Gareth Jones, in association with the artist and from the original plates, in the mid-1980s.

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The following archival sources have been utilised.

BBC Written Archive Centre:

- *150 Years of Lithography*, transcript, Third Programme, 24<sup>th</sup> November 1948.
- *Masterpieces for Your Home*, transcript, BBC Television, 15<sup>th</sup> May 1951.

RCA Print Archive – material assembled by Silvie Turner for the *Spirit of the Staircase* exhibition, 1996.

Tate Gallery Archive

- Artists International Association, London, TGA 7043.
- British Council, London, British Council Visual Arts: graphic arts exhibitions, TGA 9712/3.
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Footnoted references to newspapers and magazines have been drawn from two different types of source: cuttings collections (within the archives referenced above) and historical newspaper or magazine collections. For the former, the archival source is cited and references may lack article titles or page numbers (where these are missing from the cutting). In relation to the latter, full references to the newspaper or magazine are given. Hard copies of the following publications were consulted at Cambridge University Library:

- *Art News and Review*,
- *House and Garden*,
- *House Beautiful*,
- *The Listener*,
- *The Tatler*.

Electronic archives of the following publications were consulted:

- *Burlington Magazine*,
- *The Daily Mail*,
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## APPENDIX ONE

### A GLOSSARY OF PRINT TECHNIQUES

A number of full descriptions of print techniques are available, for example in Antony Griffiths *Prints and printmaking* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), London: British Museum Press, 1996. This appendix offers short explanations of processes of particular relevance to this thesis.

#### **Relief, intaglio and planar**

Printmaking techniques are traditionally split into relief and intaglio. In both, the artist cuts down into the surface to be printed (the 'plate') either directly or by applying acid. In **relief** printing ink is then applied to the remaining raised surface, and this is what prints. In **intaglio** printing, ink enters the areas that have been cut and is wiped from the raised surface. The cut lines are thus what prints. Intaglio printmaking requires great pressure to force the (usually dampened) paper into the cut lines so as to pick up the ink.

**Planar** techniques differ in that the surface is not cut away. The main examples are lithography and screenprinting.

#### **Colour**

Most artists' colour prints have been made using a process of colour separation. That is, multiple plates are created, one for each colour, with each only printing the relevant parts of the image (possibly overlaying to produce additional hues or tones).

## Etching

Etching is an intaglio technique that uses metal plates coated with a protective waxy resin layer (or 'ground'). In **hard-ground etching**, the artist draws their design by scratching through the ground with a needle. The plate is then placed in an acid bath and the metal below the drawn lines is bitten away, creating narrow incisions to hold the ink. Broadly, this process encourages pictures characterised by line.

In **aquatint**, the ground is applied as tiny granules, rather than as an even coat. Dipping the plate in acid results in the areas around the granules being bitten away and, when inked and printed, this produces an even tone that will be darker if the acid has bitten deeper. An image can thus be created by exposing different parts of the plate to the acid for different lengths of time, or burnishing the plate in desired areas to reduce or remove the pits. The technique is named after its ability to imitate watercolour or ink wash pictures.

In **sugar-lift aquatint**, the artist brushes their design onto a metal plate using sugar solution. The plate is then coated with an acid-resistant ground before being warmed and washed, a process that removes the ground but only where the soluble sugar solution had been applied. These bare areas can then receive a granulated aquatint ground before etching in acid, so that they will hold ink. The final image thus prints the marks originally applied by brush using the sugar solution, as a positive.

## Linocut

Linocut is a relief technique. Traditionally, the artist cuts away the soft lino surface manually using gouges, but experimental approaches have etched the surface with acid or embedded

it with textured materials such as sand. Broadly, this process encourages pictures with large areas of flat colour, though experimental techniques allow more tonal variation.

### **Lithography**

The artist draws their design on the plate in a greasy medium (crayon, tusche or lithographic chalk). The plate is then dampened, with the water repelled from the greasy drawing but remaining on the rest of the plate. When lithographic ink (which is itself greasy) is rolled onto the plate, this then adheres to the greasy drawing only. The plate can then be put through a (relatively low pressure) press (this low pressure potentially allowing large runs without loss of quality). Broadly, this process encourages pictures that are freely drawn, with a variety of marks, as well as large areas of even ink.

Traditionally, the lithographic artist drew onto a porous limestone slab, which absorbed water in the non-drawn areas. However, from the nineteenth century zinc plates entered use, treated to make them porous. These two methods remained dominant in the post-war period, although methods of drawing on plastic sheets were also entering use.

In **offset lithography**, the ink on the plate is first printed onto a rubber cylinder and this in turn prints onto paper moved across its rolling surface. The rotation of the cylinder is easily mechanised for cheap, high-volume printing. A side-effect of the two-stage printing process is that the image is returned to its original orientation. Off-set lithography remains the principle form of commercial printing.

In **transfer lithography**, the image is again drawn with greasy lithographic materials but applied to treated paper (usually soaked with gum Arabic and dried). The drawing is applied face down to a lithographic stone, dampened and run through the press, transferring it to the stone for printing. The two-stage process again returns the image to its original orientation.

### **Screenprinting**

Ink is transferred to the paper by being forced through a tensed mesh with a squeegee. The artist creates an image by blocking the ink in desired areas with a stencil or by applying an emulsion to the screen that then hardens. Early screenprinting facilitated pictures formed from large blocks of even colour, though subsequent technical developments have allowed wider effects and the imitation of other techniques.

In **photo screenprinting** a light sensitive emulsion is applied to the screen. The artist creates their design (or reproduces a photograph) on a transparent medium (such as acetate) which is placed in front of the screen before it is exposed to light. The light hardens the emulsion, except in those areas blocked by the design, from which it is subsequently washed out. Ink will thus only pass through the mesh in these areas.

## APPENDIX TWO

### PRINT PRICES AND AFFORDABILITY

#### **A Note on Pre-Decimal Coinage**

Prior to decimalisation in 1971, the British pound (£) was divided into 20 shillings, each shilling comprising 12 pennies (d). One pound was thus worth 240 pennies.

Various formats were available to state prices. That used here states pounds then shillings then pennies, each divided by a slash and with a £-sign at the front and a d. at the end and a 0 used to indicate zero, e.g. £4/4/0d meaning four pounds and four shillings or £0/12/6d meaning 12 shillings and sixpence.

A guinea represented one pound and one shilling (£1/1/0d). Although guinea coins had not been issued since the early nineteenth century, ahead of decimalisation pricing in guineas continued to be used in some contexts notably professional fees and luxury good, including, on occasion, art.

#### **Prices for Contemporary British Prints**

The following table shows prices for impressions of key works discussed in the main text and of other example for context. Data are not comprehensive (and discounts were sometimes offered) but are intended to give an accurate impression of relative cost. Prices are for unframed prints and inclusive of tax, where these can be determined (a frame and mount for the *AIA 1951 Lithographs* cost an additional £2/2/0d). Sizes are given in imperial

measurements primarily drawn from contemporary sources; it is not always clear if these relate to paper size or image size. Edition sizes are given for large editions where known.

Year	Event (editions size, for large editions only; medium, where this is not lithography)	Size	Price	Notes
1937	Contemporary Lithographs, first series (400)	30"x20"	£1/11/6d	1
1938	Contemporary Lithographs second series (400)	24"x18"	£1/5/0d	1
1940	<i>Everyman Prints</i> , black and white	8"x12"	£0/1/0d	2
	<i>Everyman Prints</i> , colour	8"x12"	£0/1/6d	2
1947	School Prints, second series (4000 – 7000)	19.5"x30"	£0/19/6d	3
1947	Lyons, first series (1500)	28.5"x38.5"	£0/15/9d	4
1948	Society of London Painter-Printers, Redfern Gallery, maximum, Graham Sutherland, <i>Maize</i>		£10/10/0d	5
	Ditto, minimum, Alice M. Coats, <i>Lilacs</i>		£2/2/0d	5
	Ditto, exemplar, Prunella Clough, <i>Sweetcorn</i>		£3/3/0d	5
1949	<i>Les Peintres-Graveurs</i> , Redfern Gallery maximum, S. W. Hayter, <i>Ceres</i> (aquatint)		£18/18/0d	6
	Ditto, minimum, Brynhild Parker, <i>St Julien</i>		£1/11/6d	6
	Ditto, exemplar, Edwin La Dell, <i>Tom in the Bathroom</i>		£4/4/0d	6
1951	Lyons, second series (1500)	20"x30" 30"x40"	£0/14/0d £0/15/9d	7
1951	<i>AIA 1951 Lithographs</i> School Prints edition (1000)	18"x 28.5" 13.5"x18" 18"x28.5"	£4/4/0d £0/12/6d	8
1952	<i>Contemporary British Lithographs II</i> , Arts Council, maximum, Charles Mozley, <i>Tea and Cakes</i>		£10/10/0d	9
	Ditto, minimum, Michael Ayrton, <i>Shepherd II</i>		£2/2/0d	9
	Ditto, exemplar, Edwin La Dell, <i>Mrs Whilmee and Daughters</i> ,		£4/4/0d	9
1953	<i>RCA Coronation Lithographs</i>	19" x 24"	£2/12/6d	10
1955	<i>London Group Prints</i> , Zwemmer Gallery, maximum		£15/15/0d	11
	Ditto, minimum		£2/2/0d	11
1956	<i>Colour Lithographs and Etchings</i> , St George's Gallery Prints, maximum, John Piper, <i>Foliate Head I</i>	19.5"x25"	£6/6/6d	12
	<i>Colour Lithographs and Etchings</i> , St George's Gallery Prints, minimum, Michael Ayrton, <i>Plaza de Toros</i>	23"x18"	£5/5/0d	12
1957	<i>Art for All</i> , Midland Group of Artists Nottingham (Zwemmer Gallery), maximum		£15/15/0d	13

	Ditto, minimum		£4/4/0d	13
	<i>New Editions Group</i> , Zwemmer Gallery, maximum, Geoffrey Clarke, <i>Detail for Sculpture</i> (aquatint)		£12/12/0d	14
	Ditto, minimum, Bernard Cheese, <i>Landing the Catch</i>		£4/4/0d	14
	Ditto, exemplar, Edwin La Dell, <i>Westminster Abbey</i>		£5/5/0d	14
1958	<i>Contemporary British Printmakers</i> , St George's Gallery Prints, maximum, Geoffrey Clarke, <i>Harlequin</i> (sugar aquatint)	24"x39"	£15/15/0	15
	Ditto, minimum, Bryan Wynter, <i>Black Abatract</i>	13"x16.5"	£4/4/0d	15
	Ditto, exemplar, Edwin La Dell, <i>Black Pond, Oakshott</i>	18"x23.5"	£5/5/0d	15
	Merlyn Evans, <i>Vertical Suite in Black</i> (sugar aquatint), St George's Gallery Prints	27"x39"	£10/10/0	16
1959	Edwin La Dell, <i>The Oxford and Cambridge Eight</i> , St George's Gallery Prints	23"x32"	£7/7/0	17
1960	George Chapman, <i>The Rhondda Suite</i> , St George's Gallery Prints (etching with aquatint) maximum and minimum	22"x31"	£11/11/0d £7/7/0d	18
	RCA/ St George's Gallery Prints, <i>Wapping to Windsor</i>	14"x19"	£3/10/0d	19

<sup>1</sup> Griffiths, 'Contemporary Lithographs Ltd', 391 and 400 n.28.

<sup>2</sup> Morris and Radford, *The AIA*, 56.

<sup>3</sup> Artmonsky, *The School Prints*, 37 and 90.

<sup>4</sup> *Sixteen Lithographs by Contemporary Artists Published by J. Lyons and Co. Ltd. with a foreword by James Laver* (Arts Council Archive, ACGB/121/621); Batchelor, *Batchelor, Tea and a Slice of Art*, 27.

<sup>5</sup> *Colour-Prints by the Society of London Painter-Printers*, exhibition catalogue, the Redfern Gallery, November – December 1948 (prices originally given in guineas).

<sup>6</sup> *Les Peintres-Graveurs*, exhibition catalogue, Redfern Gallery, 1<sup>st</sup> December to 31<sup>st</sup> December 1949 (prices originally given in guineas).

<sup>7</sup> 'J Lyons and Co Ltd Lithograph Order Form' (Arts Council Archive, ACGB/121/621); Batchelor, *Batchelor, Tea and a Slice of Art*, 27.

<sup>8</sup> *AIA 1951 Lithographs* (Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/2/26/5); *1951 Festival of Britain Colour Lithographs* (Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043/2/26121-73).

<sup>9</sup> *Contemporary British Lithographs II* (Arts Council Archive, ACGB/121/177). Prices are taken from a hand annotation, the brochure states a maximum price of £6/6/0.

Leslie's piece useful – 4 to 18gns.

<sup>10</sup> *Paintings by Ceri Richards & Alphonse Quizet : Prints by Vlaminck : R.C.A. Coronation Lithographs*, exhibition catalogue, Redfern Gallery, 28 April-23 May 1953.

<sup>11</sup> Stated as the range in Graham Hughes, 'Reproduced Art', *Art News and Review*, 19<sup>th</sup> March 1955, 3.



<sup>12</sup> *Colour Lithographs and Etchings*, exhibition catalogue, St George's Gallery Prints, August 1956. All prints in this exhibition were either £5/5/0d or £6/6/0d.

<sup>13</sup> Stated as the range in 'Art within reach of every purse', Nottingham Guardian-Journal, 16 Feb 1957 (Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 992/8/5)

<sup>14</sup> *New Colour Prints* (Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 992/8/6). The catalogue for the 1956 exhibition does not include prices. Other works matched the maximum and minimum.

<sup>15</sup> *Contemporary British Printmakers, 1958*, exhibition catalogue, St George's Gallery Prints, 1<sup>st</sup> July – 30<sup>th</sup> August 1958.

<sup>16</sup> *Merlyn Evans: Vertical Suite in Black*, exhibition catalogue, St George's Gallery Prints, London, 5<sup>th</sup> February – 5<sup>th</sup> March 1958. Size here is paper size. Original pricing in guineas.

<sup>17</sup> *Edwin La Dell: The Oxford and Cambridge Eight*, exhibition catalogue, St George's Gallery Prints, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> November 1959. Size here is paper size. Original pricing in guineas.

<sup>18</sup> *George Chapman: The Rhondda Suite*, exhibition catalogue, St George's Gallery Prints, London, 3<sup>rd</sup> August – 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1960. Size here is paper size. Original pricing in guineas.

<sup>19</sup> *Wapping to Windsor*, exhibition catalogue, St George's Gallery Prints – 2<sup>nd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> July 1960.

Whilst the amount of variation makes trends difficult to discern, the price of prints seems to have been relatively stable over the fifteen years from 1945, and in line with general inflation. In the late 1940s, £4/4/0 (i.e. four guineas) was a typical price for a limited edition lithograph, and this only rose in the late 1950s and by roughly three pounds. Over a similar period, the Retail Price Index (where 2010 = 100) rose just under twofold, and at a relatively steady rate, from 2.971 in 1945 to 5.568 in 1960).<sup>791</sup>

### **Comparative Prices for Continental Prints and Other Art Works**

For comparison, amongst continental printmakers shown by the Zwemmer Gallery in 1947, example prices (selected with the intention of representativeness) were (Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 992/8/5):

- Pablo Picasso, etching: £18/18/0d;
- Georges Roualt, engraving: £52/10/0d.

<sup>791</sup> Gregory Clark, 'What Were the British Earnings and Prices Then? (New Series)', MeasuringWorth, 2020, <http://www.measuringworth.com/ukearnncpi/>, accessed 17<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

Among continental artists shown at Les Peintres-Graveurs, some commanded high prices but others were in a similar range to the British artists (exhibition catalogue, Redfern Gallery, 1st December to 31st December 1949):

- Pablo Picasso, aquatint: £21/0/0d;
- Edouard Vuillard, lithograph: £36/15/0d;
- André Masson, lithograph: £8/8/0d;
- André Minaux, lithography: £3/3/0d.

As a second point of comparison, a number of artists engaged in printmaking also sold paintings through the Zwemmer Gallery, and prices were in the order of ten times higher (Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 992/8/5):

- Edward Bawden, 1954, watercolour: £42/0/0d;
- Edwin La Dell, 1955, watercolour, £15/15/0d;
- Fred Uhlman, 1956, oil, £26/5/0 to £68/5/0d;
- Julian Trevelyan, 1958, £26/5/0 to £94/10/0d (Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 992/8/6).

### **The Affordability Context: Incomes and Household Prices**

Whilst the changing relative price of basic goods make the value of historical earnings hard to interpret, the print prices shown above can be considered against average nominal earnings. Such earnings for selected years are shown in the table below.<sup>792</sup> The price of a limited edition work from the *AIA 1951 Lithographs* thus represented 1.2% of annual average earnings (the same percentage applied to the 2019 average of £27,976 give £342). The price of an RCA Coronation Lithograph was 0.7% of annual average earnings (giving £184 if applied to the 2019 figure):

	Average Annual Nominal Earnings (£)
1947	278
1948	300
1951	344

<sup>792</sup> Ibid.

1953	400
1956	478
1958	514
1960	545

An impressionistic sense of the cost of prints can be gained from a comparison with the prices for other household goods (in December 1952 Neville Wallis noted how ‘Even in London prices are absurdly low just now. A colour lithograph ... may be picked up as cheaply as an umbrella’).<sup>793</sup> Such comparisons suggest that the rough typical price identified for a limited edition lithograph (£4/4/0) until the late 1950s was significantly cheaper than electrical or white goods and much furniture and about four times the cost of a good bottle of alcohol or an illustrated book. The latter were roughly the same price as a large-edition lithograph.

Example prices from 1947 (taken from advertising in the *Daily Mail*, 5<sup>th</sup> May, marked \*, or the *Times*, 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> June, marked \*\*):

- GEC radio: £14/14/0d (excluding tax);\*
- Barkers women’s coat: £4/5/11d;\*
- Three piece suite: £86/2/0d;\*
- Illustrated book (E.W. Shepherd, *The Army*): £1/1/10d;\*\*
- Mackinlay’s Scotch whisky (bottle): £1/5/9d.\*\*

Example prices from 1953 (taken from advertising in *House and Garden*):

- Fourteen inch colour television: £82/19/6d;
- Compton electric space heater: £22/4/4d;
- Two seater settee: £23/0/0d;
- Small, folding oak table: £2/18/0d;
- Illustrated book (*The Royal Gardens*): £0/12/6d;
- Pride of Portugal vintage port (bottle) £1/5/0d.

<sup>793</sup> Neville Wallis, ‘Original Finds’, the *Observer*, 7<sup>th</sup> December 1952, Tate Gallery Archive TGA 7043/16/3.

Example prices from 1958 (taken from advertising in the *Daily Mail*, 2<sup>nd</sup> June marked \*, or the *Times*, marked \*\*):

- Electrolux fridge: £53/7/10d;\*
- Manual lawn mower: £8/15/8d;\*
- Slimline women's shoes: £3/9/0d;\*
- Barkers of Knightsbridge dress and jacket: £12/12/0d;\*\*,
- Illustrated book (*Atlas of the Night Sky*): £3/5/10d;\*\*,
- Single volume of *Times Atlas of the World*: £5/5/0d;\*\*,
- South African Sherry (bottle) £0/13/6d. \*\*

### APPENDIX THREE

#### THE AUTOLITHOGRAPHY DEBATE AND REPRODUCTIONS

If the devaluation of prints relative to paintings was near universal in post-war commentary, a different comparison was often drawn when prints – and in particular lithographs – were being promoted. This was with reproductions of works from museum collections.<sup>794</sup> For many commentators such reproductions were anathema: ‘strange misrepresentations of masters old and new’ according to Clive Bell, who aimed particular fire at reproductions of van Gogh sunflowers, already something of a cliché.<sup>795</sup> Objections were made on grounds of reproductive quality and/ or an in-principle opposition to the lack of input from the artist of the work reproduced (the latter made, ironically, in language similar to that denigrating prints for a lack of ‘directness’).<sup>796</sup> In 1950, Barnett Freedman summarised the position ‘people of discernment have begun to question the validity of photomechanical reproductions as objects of intrinsic beauty and have sought to replace them with autographic works printed from surfaces actually produced by the artist’.<sup>797</sup>

Such claims for the particular aesthetic power of the original print assumed consensus about what constituted an ‘original’, but in fact this was itself a matter of debate, a debate pursued in particular in relation to lithography (where works claimed as originals were referred to as

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<sup>794</sup> Reproductions were themselves lithographs, raising an anxiety for artist-lithographers.

<sup>795</sup> Bell, ‘Introduction’, unpaginated. A counter view came from Jan Gordon, who criticised a perceived snobbish preference for the original print, even when a reproduction might be aesthetically superior (‘Contemporary Lithographs’, 46).

<sup>796</sup> Kenneth Clark articulated this argument in launching the *Everyman Lithographs*, asserting that reproductions had an aesthetic failing – ‘they go dead on one’ – which could be remedied by opportunities to ‘buy direct works of art’ (Horton, ‘Art for Everyman’, 160).

<sup>797</sup> Freedman, ‘Auto-Lithography’, 63.

‘autolithographs’, a particular instance of the more general idea of the original, or ‘autograph’, print). Discussion had started before the war, with Freedman setting out his stall in 1936. A reproduction, he contended, was made whenever a work in another medium was copied onto the lithographic plate by photography or by an expert technician; an autolithograph was created only when an artist worked ‘directly’ with the lithographic materials. He was catholic over whether these materials were applied to a stone, a zinc plate, transfer paper or film, and whether impressions were pulled by the artist, in a limited run, or machine printed in a high-volume, offset edition (‘for every lithograph is an original, even if the run on the machine is a hundred thousand’).<sup>798</sup> Freedman rehearsed the same broad argument in 1950, in an article that repeatedly valorised the idea of ‘directness’ and the ‘freedom of expression’ that ‘emanat[es] directly from the artist’s hand to the printing surface’.<sup>799</sup> Edwin La Dell followed Freedman, both in championing autolithography and in taking a broad view of the materials and print processes that might be employed.<sup>800</sup> However, La Dell was more sceptical about the relationship between the artist’s touch and the final product and, unusually amongst otherwise universal appeals to mechanical ‘directness’ as a definitive quality, emphasised the importance of a reflective intellectual and aesthetic engagement from the artist employed at every stage of proofing: ‘deciding on the tone colour, redrawing and removing work during the process of printing’.<sup>801</sup>

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<sup>798</sup> Freedman, ‘Lithography, a Painter’s Excursion’, 13. This was a view suited to Freedman’s technical role for the Lyons series; in contrast, Bell’s catalogue introduction for the Society of London Painter-Printers exhibition in 1948 explicitly distanced its offer from machine-printed editions.

<sup>799</sup> Freedman, ‘Auto-Lithography’, 63.

<sup>800</sup> One should not ‘overdo the precious element of hand-printing’ (Edwin La Dell, ‘Autolithography at the Royal College of Art’, *Penrose Annual*, 46, 1952, 46).

<sup>801</sup> La Dell, ‘Autolithography’, 47. La Dell was keen to assert, against what he believed was a common perception that, in painting as much as lithography, a picture is built up by a logical process of adjustment and readjustment, not by lucky accident – contradicting Minton’s statement that chance effects were a key attraction of lithography to the painter (*150 Years of Lithography*, transcript). Though transfer paper, utilised

An apparent counter argument was made by Peter Floud.<sup>802</sup> Floud was a champion of ‘original’ lithography but doubtful about the value placed on the autolithograph when this was defined by the artist’s touch.<sup>803</sup> He complemented in-principle arguments with specific examples from large editions, claiming that the most successful prints were often expert transcriptions (Grant’s ‘Still Life’ for Lyons was, for example, superior to the ‘disaster’ of his earlier autolithograph ‘Ballet’).<sup>804</sup> The debate, however, was confused, entangling multiple issues. La Dell’s primary claim (and to an extent Freedman’s) was for the superiority of autolithographs to photo-mechanical reproductions of museum paintings; Floud, on the other hand, ignored this consideration in his article (and elsewhere asserted a preference for lithographic ‘originals’) advocating only for the merits of the craft transcription of contemporary pictures designed to be lithographed.<sup>805</sup> Moreover, whilst the issues at stake were not confined to large-edition series, the debate faded somewhat in Britain along with the eclipse of that form from the mid-1950s. Within a fine-art paradigm for retailing lithography, less emphasis was placed on the particularities of who did what in production and more on guarantees of quality contained within the product: the use of the best paper,

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vigorously by Miller’s Press, was explicitly within the range of Freedman’s autolithographic processes, La Dell’s conception would not accommodate examples where the artists was not engaged in proofing.

<sup>802</sup> Floud, ‘Some Doubts’, *passim*.

<sup>803</sup> For Floud’s advocacy of autolithography see ‘150 Years of Lithography’, 1: ‘there is still a widespread prejudice against lithography on the part of the buying public, based on a confused and quite mistaken idea that they are “reproductions” and not “originals”’.

<sup>804</sup> Floud argued that the claim for (manual) autolithographic superiority rests on three points, none of which stand up. First, an autolithograph has unique qualities of texture and depth but, he claims, lithographic inks are uniform. Second, there is an honesty where the creative artist carries through whole process, but this ignores the printer’s role in producing the final edition. Third, the artist’s vision is realised directly in the autolithograph, but colour lithography is always multi-stage due to colour separations, and the artist works with materials, such as lithographic ink, which do not show the colour as printed.

<sup>805</sup> Freedman also, on occasion, advocated for the superiority of artist-drawn lithographs over craftsman copies, but oversaw production of several of the latter in the Lyons series, including Grant’s ‘Still Life’.

limiting and numbering of the edition, and the presence of the artist's autographic signature.<sup>806</sup>

Whilst the competing virtues of autographic and transcribed lithographs exercised the specialist print journals, potential buyers seem to have made little of such distinctions, or even that between purpose-made artists' lithographs and museum reproductions.<sup>807</sup> An indication of this came in the treatment of contemporary prints in fashion and interiors magazines. Across the 1950s, lithographs (and other prints) appeared as props in photographs to signify modernity and style.<sup>808</sup> However, descriptive information about these works, where it appears, shows little concern to distinguish originals from reproductions: despite School Prints careful emphasis on originality in advertising their edition of the *AIA 1951 Lithographs*, a copy of Julian Trevelyan's *Regatta* was listed by *House Beautiful* as a 'School Prints reproduction', as was Trevelyan's *Harbour* from School Prints' first series.<sup>809</sup> Nor did the magazines show any special allegiance to artists' prints; reproductions of popular modern artists such as Raoul Dufy could do the job as well, and were used more

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<sup>806</sup> There was a recrudescence of the debate in the US somewhat later, largely in relation to the incorporation of photographic elements within prints.

<sup>807</sup> Such distinctions also confused critics. Graham Hughes' review of the London Group Print exhibition of 1955 (*Art News and Review*, 19 March 1955, 3) suggests all the works were 'reproductions from original paintings' but this was self-evidently not accurate.

<sup>808</sup> For example, Ceri Richards' 'Two Females' appeared (uncredited) in an advertising feature in *House Beautiful*, March 1952, 38, while a parallel feature in September showed a Robert Colquhoun print (*House Beautiful*, September 1952, 10). A G-Plan advert in *House and Garden* included Bernard Cheese's 'The Drum Major', his contribution to the RCA *Coronation Lithographs* (*House and Garden*, November 1954, 4), and three prints from this series (by Richards, William Scott and Geoffrey Clarke) were shown in a Linoleum advert from March 1955 (*House and Garden*, March 1955, 11).

<sup>809</sup> *House Beautiful*, November 1958, 59 (*Regatta* is titled *View of the Thames*) and March 1955, 35. Similarly, a copy of Graham Sutherland's 'Hanging form, Owl and Bat' is described in an advertising feature from 1957 as a 'lithograph reproduction', despite the edition having been printed in Paris in 1955 by Mourlot, famous for his work in support of leading artists' autolithographs (*House Beautiful*, June 1957, 39).



frequently.<sup>810</sup> As has been noted, interiors magazines also carried occasional guides to buying art for the home on a budget and in these, again, autographic prints and reproductions were both covered, with no distinction made.<sup>811</sup> At the turn of the 1960s, a *Tatler* feature, 'Counter Spy ... puts you in the pictures', was a little more careful to separate high-quality museum reproductions ('Scientific copies' in its phrasing) from 'original prints by modern artists'.<sup>812</sup> However, it asserted no preference between them while other contemporary journalism suggested that, as the 1950s came to a close, the potential purchasing public remained stubbornly ignorant of print distinctions and had not embraced a particular value in autographic work. Leslie Adrian's *Spectator* article, 'Pictures for the Poor', from July 1959, quoted Robert Erskine lamenting how 'the public's unawareness that such prints are genuine works of art and not copies' meant they were not appreciated as they should be.<sup>813</sup> Indeed, Erskine had made his own concerted attempt at public education through production of the film *Artists' Proof*, combining demonstrations of different techniques by contemporary artists with illustrations of work by earlier masters (Dürer, Rembrandt, Goya, and Daumier) to establish the technique's credentials.<sup>814</sup> Adrian ends his piece on an optimistic note, but the similarity of his phrasing to earlier comments by Freedman and others suggest that this was little more than formulaic: 'The artist's print has a growing and enthusiastic following among people who have tired of reproductions and,

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<sup>810</sup> Ganymed Press reproductions were popular, as were those of the Medici Galleries, and the Tate. See, for example, *House Beautiful*, November 1954, 30; July 1957, 51; January 1958, 46; February 1958, 39; *House and Garden*, June 1951, 63; March 1952, 71. Even van Gogh's Sunflowers put in an occasional appearance (*House Beautiful*, August 1956, 24-25; September 1958, 53.)

<sup>811</sup> See, for example, *House Beautiful*, 'Time for Pictures', March 1955, 32-36 and *House Beautiful*, 'House Beautiful's own picture gallery', July 1958, 36-37.

<sup>812</sup> The *Tatler*, May 1960, 465.

<sup>813</sup> Adrian, 'Pictures for the Poor', 16.

<sup>814</sup> The film was shot in December 1956 in collaboration with the Shell Film Unit. It is not now available in the UK.

having more taste than money, have discovered this source of cheap originals—not, it is true, unique, but from the artist's own hand, and expressing his intentions no less truly than his paintings.<sup>815</sup>

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<sup>815</sup> Adrian, 'Pictures for the Poor', 17.

## APPENDIX FOUR

### PRINT RETAILING AND EXHIBITIONS

#### **The State of Print Retailing**

The first New Editions Group exhibition, at the Zwemmer Gallery in 1956, prompted several reflections on the state of British print retailing that were universally negative. Michael Rothenstein noted that, set against the interest of artists such as himself, the channels for distribution were ‘disappointing’, while Neville Wallis regretted the ‘reluctance’ of most commercial galleries to handle prints, particularly those in black and white.<sup>816</sup> The latter point emphasised the destruction of the network of London galleries and regional print dealers that had met demand during the pre-war etching boom.<sup>817</sup> Carey and Griffith’s state that the Redfern Gallery was, excepting occasional works in mixed shows, effectively ‘the only retail outlet for contemporary prints’ in the decade after 1945, and it largely confined itself to lithographs (though its range of media expanded over time).<sup>818</sup>

Carey and Griffiths somewhat overstate the case, and this appendix is in part intended to note additional retailing activities in the decade from 1945. Nonetheless, their broad emphasis is valid, as is the assertion that a key agent for change in the mid-1950s was St George’s Gallery Prints. The latter’s exhibitions are listed separately, in Appendix 8, but other retailers also became active at this time, and this appendix is also intended to register such activity. The appendix aims to be illustrative rather than providing a comprehensive

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<sup>816</sup> Rothenstein, ‘Prints and Printmaking’, *Art News and Review*, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1956, 2; Wallis, ‘At the Galleries: Prints’, the *Observer*, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1956, Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 992/8/5.

<sup>817</sup> See Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 16.

<sup>818</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

account; data was accumulated from contemporary print sources during wider research, rather than resulting from a systematic search for evidence relating to retailing and exhibitions (and note this has provided no information for activity outside England).

### **The Redfern Gallery**

Gordon Samuel lists twenty-one Redfern Gallery shows between 1948 and 1959 (inclusive) where British or foreign prints were the main element or a substantial component.<sup>819</sup> The RCA Coronation Lithographs had a launch exhibition here (see *Chapter Three*) and the AIA 1951 Lithographs were sold through it (see *Chapter Two*). Carey and Griffiths note that the Redfern business model generally passed risk to the artist through a sale or return approach, limiting interest and militating against editioning.<sup>820</sup>

### **The AIA Gallery**

The AIA Gallery opened in Soho in 1947, as a permanent base for the Artists' International Association. From the outset, it held a number of solo and group shows where prints (mostly lithographs) were a substantial or dominant presence including:

- December 1948 – Lithographs by La Dell, Lamb and Mozley;
- January 1949 – Paintings and lithographs by Edwin La Dell; lithographs by Stella Marsden;
- March 1949 – *Artists Under Thirty*, featuring lithographs by. inter alia. Opal Echalarz; Monica Duclos and Marsden;
- 20<sup>th</sup> September to 18<sup>th</sup> October 1949 – Contemporary Graphic Art;
- 4<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1950 – Annual Exhibition of Graphic Art;

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<sup>819</sup> *British Prints of the Post-War Years 1946-60*, exhibition catalogue, Redfern Gallery, 21<sup>st</sup> January – 19<sup>th</sup> February 1986, 40.

<sup>820</sup> Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 21.

- 15<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> March 1951 – AIA Travelling Exhibition: Graphic Section;
- 29<sup>th</sup> May to 18<sup>th</sup> June 1952 – Exhibition of Prints and Drawings;
- 16<sup>th</sup> May to 12<sup>th</sup> June 1953 – *Colour Prints*;
- 1954 – *An AIA Travelling Exhibition of Contemporary Paintings and Lithographs*;
- 20<sup>th</sup> November to 24<sup>th</sup> December 1955 – *Colour Prints for Christmas*.

### **The Arts Council**

The Arts Council held two touring exhibitions (with works for sale) titled *Contemporary British Lithographs* in 1951 and 1952. An exhibition of work published by Miller's Press was toured as *Contemporary British Lithographs Published by Millers of Lewes* in 1954, while *Contemporary Lithographs and Prints*, toured in 1955, contained both British and foreign works. The second series of Lyons lithographs was exhibited at the Arts Council's St James' Square gallery in 1951.

### **The Senefelder Club**

The Senefelder Clubs annual exhibitions (for lithography) were relaunched after the war with a catholic mix of contemporary artists and a new emphasis on colour (though it retained a reputation for light '*jeu d'esprit*').<sup>821</sup>

- July 1948 – Royal Watercolour Society;
- July 1950 – Beaux Arts Gallery;
- October 1951 – Beaux Arts Gallery;
- 1952 – AIA Gallery;
- November 1953 – AIA Gallery;
- December 1954 – Beaux Arts Gallery.

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<sup>821</sup> Wallis, 'Original Finds', the *Observer*, 7<sup>th</sup> December 1952, Tate Gallery Archive TGA TGA 7043/16/3.

### Zwemmer Gallery and the New Editions Group

The Zwemmer Gallery in Charing Cross Road had a history of dealing in reproductions. In the immediate post-war years it featured occasional print exhibitions from its roster of artists. However, from the mid-1950s it accommodated a series of more significant shows, starting with the first print exhibition by members of the London Group (a significant exhibiting society founded in 1913) in March 1955, and followed by five shows from the New Editions Group between 1956 and 1963. In December 1956, it also hosted *Three Exhibitions of Prints*.

Philip James of the Arts Council provided an introduction to the first New Editions Group catalogue; this describes it as ‘a serious attempt to raise the standard of printmaking’ but otherwise repeats well-rehearsed lines about the higher status and better facilities for printmaking in France. The group seems to have been relatively informal and made no statement of intent, though by its third exhibition, in 1959, the catalogue makes a distinction between members and guests. That Michael Rothenstein played a leading organisational role is suggested by his article in *Art News and Review*, coinciding with the first show.<sup>822</sup>

### Other Selling Exhibitions

- 1948 – Paul Alexander Gallery (190 Church Street Kensington), *Contemporary English Lithographs*;
- 1948 – The Kensington Art Gallery, lithographs, including work by La Dell;
- July 1950 – Building Centre, Conduit Street, *Exhibition of Colour Lithographs*;
- July 1950 – Royal Institute, Piccadilly, *Annual Exhibition of the Society of Graphic Art*;
- 1951 Crafts Centre, *Colour Lithographs*;

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<sup>822</sup> Rothenstein, ‘Prints and Printmaking’, *Art News and Review*, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1956, 2.

- February 1957, The *Times* Bookshop Picture Gallery, *Contemporary Colour Prints*.

Large-edition lithographs were sold by the publishers (including from Lyons' restaurants). There is some evidence for both large and limited edition prints (as well as reproductions) being sold from stock held by department stores, at least in London: for example, when three prints from the *RCA Coronation Lithographs* were used in a Linoleum advert (two years after production) these were sourced from Wolland's of Knightsbridge and this series was exhibited at Heal's.<sup>823</sup>

### Outside London

Outside London, various artist-organised attempts to improve retail options were made. In December 1951, a number of St Ives-based artists, including Peter Lanyon, organised *Prints for Under £1* in a local furniture shop, with an explicit focus on affordability.<sup>824</sup> Rothenstein was again central to the organisation of the Great Bardfield *Summer Exhibitions*, where, from 1954, the professional artists living in the village sold works (including, though not exclusively, prints) directly from their houses to an audience comprising locals and visitors from the London art establishment.<sup>825</sup> An exhibition of lithographs by staff and students from the Bath Academy of Art, held at Dartington Hall, Devon was held in 1955.

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<sup>823</sup> House and Garden, March 1955, 11.

<sup>824</sup> See Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 178.

<sup>825</sup> Other artists involved included Edward Bawden, George Chapman and, latterly, Bernard Cheese. For Rothenstein's organising role see Silas Clifford-Smith, *Under Moonlight: a portrait of Great Bardfield Artists Stanley Clifford-Smith and Joan Glass*, Dulwich Hill, New South Wales: Silas Clifford-Smith, 2015, 41. Exhibitions were held in 1954, 1955 and 1958; an exhibition including amateur artists had been held in 1951.

Historically, regional print specialists had (for better or worse) been complemented by sales from booksellers and framing shops. No such activity seems to have survived beyond the war, with print retailing outside London depending on these artist-organised events or touring exhibitions from London (such as the *Art for All* exhibitions at the Midland Group of Artists gallery, Nottingham, featuring work from Zwemmer, in 1957, and St George's Gallery Prints, in 1959).



**APPENDIX FIVE**  
**THE AIA 1951 LITHOGRAPHS: CONTENTS, PRODUCTION AND**  
**ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY**

**Contents**

The list of prints in the table below, along with their titles and numbering, is taken from a typescript prepared for an AIA advertisement for the series ('AIA 1951 Lithographs', TGA 7043/3/60 and TGA 7043/2/26/6).

	<b>Artist</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>School Print</b>	<b>Open Competition</b>	<b>AIA Member</b>	<b>Notes</b>
1	John Aldridge	<i>Great Bardfield</i>			✓	1
2	Edward Ardizzone	<i>The Wreck</i>	✓		✓	
3	James Boswell	<i>The Winning Side</i>	✓		✓	
4	Patrick Carpenter	<i>Street Market</i>		✓	✓	
5	Bernard Cheese	<i>Wads and Tea</i>		✓	✓	2
6	Edwin La Dell	<i>M.C.C. at Lords</i>	✓		✓	2
7	Lynton Lamb	<i>Country House</i>	✓			2, 3
8	Stella Marsden	<i>Horse Guards</i>	✓	✓	✓	2
9	John Minton	<i>Jamaica</i>			✓	2, 4
10	Edwin Oldfield <sup>826</sup>	<i>Derby Day</i>		✓	✓	
11	Sheila Robinson	<i>Fun Fair</i>		✓		2
12	Leonard Rosoman	<i>Edinburgh</i>			✓	
13	Michael Rothenstein	<i>Cockerel</i>			✓	1, 2
14	Laurence Scarfe	<i>The Bird Boy</i>			✓	4
15	James Sellars	<i>Sheffield Steel</i>		✓		
16	Julian Trevelyan	<i>Regatta</i>	✓		✓	
17	Fred Uhlman	<i>North Wales</i>		✓	✓	
18	Keith Vaughan	<i>Dancers</i>			✓	2, 3

**Notes**

- 1 = Part of Rothenstein's Great Bardfield proposal to the Arts Council.
- 2 = Alternative titling used in series brochure or elsewhere (see details below).
- 3 = Commissioned at the suggestion of the Arts Council.
- 4 = Late addition (see 'Printing and Editioning' below)

<sup>826</sup> Edwin Oldfield appears to be the artist listed as Tony Oldfield in Buckman, *Artists in Britain*, 1197.

More detailed notes on the titling of John Minton's *Jamaica* and AIA membership follow.

This list has been preferred to other archive sources, including a printed brochure (TGA 7043/2/33 and TGA 7043/2/26/5), as it is the only document to list all and only the eighteen published prints.

The brochure seems to have been printed prematurely. It omits Minton's print (though in the Tate Archive copies this is added in a hand-written annotation) and adds three additional lithographs (giving a total of twenty). These are:

- Anthony Gross      *Oxford Street*
- William Scott      *Harbour*
- Charles Mozley      *Hyde Parke Corner*

Garton and Griffiths state that these were not, in fact, published.<sup>827</sup> This fits my own archival search: an undated list of 'Printing and Proofing Costs' itemises the costs for each print produced and lists the same eighteen as on the typescript list (TGA 7043/2/26/86) while eighteen prints were sent to the Arts Council and to the Pebble Beach Gallery in California (TGA 7043/2/26/10-12). See also the note on the selection process, below.

The use of the typescript source leads to some differences in titling from Griffiths (where the brochure is the stated source) and Garton (which also seems to be primarily based on this).

The alternatives are:

- Bernard Cheese      *Coffee Stall*
- Lynton Lamb      *The Country House*
- Stella Marsden      *Horse Guards Parade*
- Sheila Robinson      *Fair Ground*
- Michael Rothenstein      *The Cockerel*

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<sup>827</sup> Garton (ed.), *British Printmakers*, Appendix XI, 323; Griffiths, 'The Print Publications', 69.

- Keith Vaughan *Festival Dancers*

The impression of Edwin La Dell's *M.C.C. at Lords* held by Aberystwyth School of Art

Collection has an autograph title (in what appears to be La Dell's hand) of *Cricket at Lords*.

### **John Minton, *Jamaica***

The print is sometimes cited as *Tropical Landscape* (Samuel, *British Prints*, no. 74; Garton, *British Printmakers*, Appendix XI, lists it as *Jamaica (Tropical Landscape)* while Beaumont-Jones *A Century of Prints*, 66, calls it *Tropical Scene*). *Tropical Landscape* was the name used in its exhibition at the Redfern Gallery in late 1951 (Victor Pasmore, *London Painter-Printers*, John Harrison, *French paintings & original prints*, exhibition catalogue, Redfern Gallery, 29<sup>th</sup> November – 29<sup>th</sup> December 1951) and the brochure for the Arts Council's *Contemporary Lithographs* touring exhibition in 1952 (ACGB/121/177). As noted under 'Printing and Editioning', below, its publication was late and it is possible that the Redfern show was its first public exhibition (though it continued to be referred to by the AIA as part of the series).

The list of 'Printing and Proofing Costs' (TGA 7043/2/26/86) shows the print as using three colours. However, impressions exist in two states: one with the addition of pink. The production history for this print thus remains somewhat unclear.

### **AIA Membership**

In the table above, AIA membership is based on records of fees for 1948 to 1960 (TGA 7043/11/3-4) with the following exceptions and caveats:

- Neither Scarfe nor Vaughan are recorded as members. However, both are listed elsewhere as members who had completed South Bank commissions (AIA

Newsletter April/ May 1951, TGA 7043/21/31), though Vaughan (along with Lamb) was earlier stated to be a non-member (AIA Central Committee Minutes, TGA 7043/2/25; see 'Selection', below).

- As Sellars and Robinson were selected through the open competition it is surprising neither are shown as fee-paying members and this may be an error in the records (which are not always clear).

### **Selection**

The AIA Newsletter's initial notice (TGA 7043/21/25) stated that:

- in addition to the open competition, the series would involve invited designs from well-known lithographers (this mixed model had been a part of the AIA's initial proposal to the Arts Council in December 1949, ACGB/121/615);
- Judging was to be by a panel comprising representatives of the AIA Central Committee, the Arts Council (confirmed in the September 1950 minutes, referenced below, as Philip James) and School Prints.

On 19 September 1950, Edwin La Dell reported to the AIA's Central Committee (TGA 7043/2/25) updating them to the effect that:

- the scheme would balance ten invited artists to ten selected artists;
- the Arts Council had suggested two artists for invitation, Keith Vaughan and Lynton Lamb, who were not AIA members;
- thirty-six artists had made a submission to the open competition, with two designs accepted outright (by Sheila Robinson and Bernard Cheese) and four artists asked to

do a further design (Stella Marsden, Fred Uhlman, John Sellars and Edwin Oldfield, all of whom were also included in the final scheme).

A further report, from the AIA Extraordinary General Meeting in October 1950 (TGA 7043/21/28), then states that the Association had agreed to cover costs for three more artists to make a further design, though only one of these, Patrick Carpenter, was included in the published set (there were reservations about Carpenter's design – see, for example, Philip James' letter to Diana Uhlman, TGA 7043/2/26/7; however printing proceeded following suggestions for improvement from James Boswell – see Philip James to Diana Uhlman, 18 July 1951, ACGB/121/615, and correspondence with Snapethorpe Hospital about a potential purchase TGA 7043/2/26/33). There is thus evidence for a total of seven artists being selected through the open competition.

A proposed shortlist of twelve invited artists (presumably on the expectation of two drop-outs) was given by the AIA to the Arts Council on 13 May 1950 (Brynhild Parker to Philip James, ACGB/121/615), probably after initial consultation, given the inclusion of Vaughan and Lamb. This included eight artists who were part of the final series:

- John Aldridge
- Edwin La Dell
- Lynton Lamb
- John Minton
- Leonard Rosoman
- Michael Rothenstein
- Julian Trevelyan
- Keith Vaughan

The four others were:

- Edward Bawden
- Fred Millet
- Kenneth Rowntree

- William Scott

Correspondence in the Arts Council Archive (ACGB/121/615) shows a number of names entering and leaving this set (though only Millet is rejected on grounds of quality). Some points of particular interest are:

- Barnett Freedman was later invited to participate but declined (La Dell to James, 31 August 1950);
- Boswell was invited on the expectation that Minton's absence from the country would preclude participation (La Dell to James, 31 August 1950);
- Gross and Mozley (who did not finally take part) were suggested in a letter from La Dell to James of 6 February 1951 (Writing to James on 13 July 1951, Diana Uhlman states Gross is abroad, but Mozley's work is still expected, as is Scott's *Harbour*); Ardizzone was also suggested at this time.
- There is no mention of when an invitation to Scarfe was made, but his print is noted as still in production on 13 July 1951 (Uhlman to James), as is Carpenter's (despite the AIA's initial commitment that the set would be ready for the start of the Festival).

A Scott print entitled *Harbour* was exhibited at the Redfern Gallery in December 1951 and seems to have simply been too late for inclusion in the series.<sup>828</sup> Dates for the Scarfe and Minton prints are discussed under 'Printing and Editioning', below.

### **Administration and Arts Council Sponsorship**

Administration of production was ad hoc. In principle the process was the responsibility of a Prints Committee which, in 1950, comprised (at least) Fred Millett, Stella Marsden, Elisabeth Aslin (as treasurer) and La Dell (La Dell is named as Chairman in a letter from Beryl Sinclair, the AIA Chairman, to Philip James of 23 December 1949, ACGB/121/615).<sup>829</sup> However, what

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<sup>828</sup> Samuel, *British Prints*, 32, no. 94.

<sup>829</sup> I retain the word 'Chairman' used in the correspondence.

started as a joint venture became, in effect, La Dell's personal initiative: Aslin resigned before May 1951, citing differences over administration (though it is not clear with whom), while Marsden resigned that June, by which time the committee had not met for over 12 months (see the Central Committee minutes for 28 May 1951, TGA 7043/2/25). The Central Committee attempted to reconstitute the Print Committee but when this proved unsuccessful it was implicitly abandoned and La Dell was asked to work with the AIA Treasurer on a required report to the Arts Council. Whilst La Dell made some complaints of having been abandoned by colleagues, he also seems to have excluded others from the project. Whilst he was voted thanks by the Central Committee on 12 June 1951 (TGA 7043/2/25), they also showed a frustration at a lack of communication: he was summoned to that meeting following Aslin's resignation and concerns were expressed that the Redfern Gallery was promoting the prints as its own after La Dell had supplied them with stock directly (see minutes for 26 May 1951, TGA 7043.2.25). La Dell also seems to have made some bilateral arrangements with School Prints, perhaps cutting across the AIA Secretary (see School Prints to Uhlman, 13 May 1951, TGA 7043.2.26).

Financial sponsorship of £500 was provided by the Arts Council, a sum which, according to Anthony Griffiths, came from its Festival of Britain visual arts budget.<sup>830</sup> The status of these moneys (as loan or grant) was, however, unclear and remained in question in a letter of 8 April 1952 from Diana Uhlman to the AIA Treasurer (TGA 7043.2.26.85); indeed, despite an assertion by the Secretary at the time, the Arts Council seems to have bought a set of the

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<sup>830</sup> Griffiths, 'The Print Publications', 62, n.23.

prints (rather than being gifted them as a token of thanks for a grant) suggesting that the £500 was indeed a loan, though there is no evidence on repayment.<sup>831</sup>

The £500 was hypothecated to cover a payment of £25 to each commissioned artist as an advanced royalty. Where artists were selected for the School Prints edition, the AIA asked them to contribute this sum to cover production costs. However, Keith Vaughan refused this arrangement and how the cost of machine printing his design was covered is not clear (see Central Committee minutes, 12 June 1951, TGA 7043/2/25 and letter from Diana Uhlman, 8 April 1952, TGA 7043/2/26/85).

### **Printing and Editioning of the Limited Edition**

The original intention was for printing by Thomas Griffitts of Vincent Brooks, Day and Son (see Edwin La Dell's note to Philip James, 21 December, 1949, ACGB/121/615). That this was not taken forward seems likely to have been due to cost. In the end, printing occurred under varied circumstances. Thirteen images were printed at the Royal College of Art (RCA) by George Devenish, who was retained on the staff as 'lithographic printer'.<sup>832</sup> Stella Marsden's design was printed by George's older brother Edwin (probably at the Central School where Edwin was employed) whilst Cheese, La Dell, Oldfield and Sellars all printed their own work, either privately or at the RCA (see table at TGA 7043/2/26/86). Tessa Sidey suggests that costs were kept down by scrounging paper and other materials from the

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<sup>831</sup> I am grateful to Jodie Edwards of the Arts Council Collection for information on this purchase (personal correspondence, 23 November 2017).

<sup>832</sup> Tessa Sidey, 'The Devenish Brothers', 372 and 375-76. In his letter to Diana Uhlman of 1952, Devenish states that he printed fourteen of the images; however, the table headed 'Printing and Proofing Costs' (presumably prepared by Devenish) shows this to be an error (TGA 7043/2/26/86 and 91).



cartridge paper was 'scrounged' from the College and purchasing second-hand pates from the Baynard Press.<sup>833</sup>

Whilst editions of fifty were planned, the initial run was of twenty-five for each design, with the exception of John Minton's *Jamaica*, which was produced slightly later in an edition of fifty (Scarfe's design, also printed later, was limited to twenty-five). Two prints (La Dell's *M.C.C. at Lords* and Rothenstein's *Cockere!*) had a second run of twenty-five, produced before April 1952 (see TGA 7043.2.26.85 and TGA 7043.2.26.91); it is unlikely that other images received a second print run after this date. The AIA brochure states that the prints were to be signed and numbered. However, surviving copies show that signing was inconsistent (for example neither the Marsden nor Boswell prints held by Tate Archive are signed, TGA 7043/22) and numbering generally did not occur (consistent with uncertainty over the size of the final print run).<sup>834</sup>

When the Scarfe and Minton prints were printed is hard to determine. The report on the series in the AIA Newsletter for October 1951, after the Festival had closed (TGA 7043/21/33), excludes these works from its listing, while Uhlman's July letter to James talks about sequential hangs of eight then eight lithographs in the Festival Hall (i.e. a total of sixteen, though numbers in this letter are inconsistent; the two prints are also added by hand to the undated list of 'Printing and Proofing Costs', TGA 7043/2/26/86). It is thus possible that these two works were not ready for display over the Festival summer. A letter

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<sup>833</sup> Ibid., 375.

<sup>834</sup> Griffiths, 'The Print Publications', 63 also makes the point that signing and numbering was inconsistent.

from Uhlman to Murdo Mackenzie on 8 April 1952 (TGA 7043/2/26) states that these additions had been printed and provides a backstop date.

### **Printing and Editioning of the School Prints Edition**

Both printing and distribution of the machine-prints was undertaken by School Prints Ltd, under a contract with the AIA, and, following three previous rounds of publication, the company described these as its own fourth series (TGA 7043.2.26.121). School Prints also acted as a distributor for the hand-printed series.

Although described as 'unlimited', the initial (and final) print run was 1000 for each of the selected prints (see the stock statement, Tate Archive, TGA 7043.2.26.136). La Dell's June 1951 presentation to the AIA Central Committee suggested that all the prints might go into the cheaper edition; however, the formal agreement with School Prints covered just six. There is no documentary evidence explaining this reduction. Griffiths suggests that the requirement for artists to pay School Prints' costs in advance was one reason for a restriction; however, School Prints third series had also been of six prints and this number may well have been chosen by them. Unfortunately, there is also no documentary evidence relating to the choice of images entered into the machine-run.

School Prints had had financial difficulty following the unpopularity of its 'European series' in 1949. It made no capital contribution to the *1951 Lithographs* project but did spend approximately £200 on marketing (see Central Committee minutes of 12 June 1951, TGA

7043.2.25). The prints were sold at £0/12/6d each with a reduction to 10s 5d for schools (in both cases including purchase tax).

### **Sales and Distribution**

As noted, the original plan was for an edition of fifty for each design, but all except those by La Dell, Rothenstein and Minton were restricted to the initial run of twenty-five. Accounts produced by the AIA dated 23 Oct 1951 suggest that approximately fifty prints were sold over the Festival summer (on the basis of a total income of £216/2/6d and a residual stock of 344, prior to production of the Scarfe and Minton works). There are also some further indicators of the relative popularity of images.

- A selection of prints were held by the Redfern Gallery on a sale or return basis until Oct 1951, of these the full set of seven impressions by Rothenstein and by Vaughan were sold, along with three of the La Dell and 1 each of those by Sellars, Robinson, Uhlman and Oldfield (TGA 7043/2/26/50).
- Twenty-six prints were sold through the RCA, including eight of the Vaughan image and nine of the Oldfield.

In 1952, Devenish noted to Uhlman that 'it is evident that they are not all Best Sellers' (TGA 7043/2/26/91).

Griffiths notes that whilst the British Museum had purchased the majority of the *Everyman Prints*, institutional accession of the *1951 Lithographs* was limited to two images, the Sellars

and the Rothenstein prints which were bought by the Victoria and Albert Museum (as noted, a full set was also purchased by the sponsors, the Arts Council).<sup>835</sup>

In its contract with the AIA, School Prints estimated that there would be sales of 2,000 for each print over three years, including 500 over the initial summer of 1951 (TGA 7043/2/26/121). By June 1952 total sales appear to have been between 305, for Lamb and Boswell, and 459, for Marsden (TGA 7043/2/26/36; numbers may have been higher as it is not clear if these figures include sales from the stock of 250 held by the AIA). On 22 April 1955, School Prints reported (TGA 7043/2/26/163) that they were running low on the Marsden print (from the initial run of 1000) and in July 1957 residual stock levels were reported showing the Marsden as sold out and the largest number of unsold prints at 312 for the Lamb image, again from the initial run of 1000 (TGA 7043/2/26/170). None of the prints went into a second run.

The AIA's approach to marketing the hand-pulled series (discussed in the main text) appears to have been largely improvisatory and consequently somewhat chaotic and resource intensive; there was nothing like the sequential tour of venues in large cities and provincial towns seen with the *Everyman Prints*. To take just two examples:

- a relationship with the Crafts Centre, Hay Hill, London, W1 seems to have produced just two sales (of the Marsden print) (TGA 7043/2/26);

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<sup>835</sup> Griffiths, 'The Print Publications', 63. The the Victoria and Albert Museum acquired a copy of the Trevelyan print at a later date.

- the successful sale of a Rothenstein and a La Dell lithograph via La Petite Club Francais in 1952 entangled the Uhlman in lengthy correspondence about undercharging for a frame (TGA 7043/2/26/54)

This approach seems to reflect a combination of the AIA's ambition for the most extensive possible distribution and its lack of professional administration in the early 1950s. In her letter to James of 13 July 1951, Uhlman complained of lack of support from the Arts Council in relation to marketing: 'I personally feel very discouraged by the support we have received in this respect, as it makes my own efforts over the past three years (unpaid) appear to have been in vain' (ACGB/121/615).

Garton, Morris and Radford and Artmonsky all state that the *AIA 1951 Lithographs* were either financed or distributed by Lyons.<sup>836</sup> I have found no archival or other evidence indicating Lyons involvement – rather a desire to distinguish the two initiatives (La Dell to James, 25 January 1950, ACGB/121/615) – and suggest that it is an error. Artmonsky's description of an exhibition of the prints 'at the Arts Council' (presumably the Gallery in St James) also appears erroneous (though the Council's 1951 touring exhibition *Contemporary British Lithographs* had included two of the AIA works) as are sales figures for the School Prints edition.

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<sup>836</sup> Garton (ed.), *British Printmakers*, Appendix XI, 323; Morris and Radford, *The AIA*, 85; Artmonsky, *The School Prints*, 125.

## Size

The image size for the majority of the limited-edition prints was 18 x 28.5 in (46 x 72 cm); those by Cheese, Minton, Rosoman and Oldfield were 13.5 x 18 in (34 x 46 cm). These size options were stated at the outset of the competition. All selected for the School Prints edition were at the larger size.

Archival sources make clear that the relatively large size of the hand-pulled prints caused difficulties. W.H. Smiths initially refused to act as a distributor at airports citing difficulty with handling while size was noted by Nan Kivell as leading to difficulty with the Redfern Gallery's agents, who disliked prints being sent rolled (TGA 7043/2/26/44 and TGA 7043/2/26/55 and /57). Griffiths suggests that there was also a more significant problem with the format: that it was associated with cheap, unlimited editions and unattractive to potential buyers of numbered and signed prints.<sup>837</sup> The concomitant consequence for School Prints, in Griffiths' view, was that large, unsigned prints were no longer easily accepted as original works of art. Given poor sales for the series, Griffiths' proposal provides one persuasive line of explanation. It should be noted, however, that the association between size and edition size was not straightforward or absolute. The *Everyman Prints* were small (at 8 x 12 in, 20 x 30 cm) despite a large edition size and the and the proposed AIA Coronation prints (mentioned in the main text) were to be a modest 18 x 14 in (46 x 36 cm) for an edition of 1,000. In his initial proposal for the *1951 Lithographs*, in a large edition, to James, La Dell stressed these would be smaller than the Lyons prints (25 January 1950, ACGB/121/615).

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<sup>837</sup> Griffiths, 'The Print Publications', 68.

**APPENDIX SIX**  
**THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART CORONATION LITHOGRAPHS: CONTENTS**  
**AND PRODUCTION**

This is an amended version of Michael Clegg, 'The Royal College of Art's Coronation Lithographs', *Print Quarterly*, 36:4, December 2009, 462 – 65, with changes made for relevance rather than factual accuracy (though the total number of prints in the RCA Print Archive is corrected).

**Content**

		<b>Artist</b>	<b>Redfern Gallery</b>	<b>AIA-RCA</b>
Included in series	1	Robert Austin	<i>Heralds</i>	<i>Heralds</i>
	2	Michael Ayrton	<i>Kettledrums</i>	<i>Kettledrums</i>
	3	Edward Bawden	<i>Life Guards</i>	<i>Life Guards</i>
	4	Joan Beales	-	<i>Procession in Pimlico</i>
	5	John Bowles	<i>Royal Barge</i>	<i>Royal Barge</i>
	6	Robert Buhler	<i>London</i>	<i>Spectators in the Mall</i>
	7	Rodney Burn	<i>Yacht with Coronation Flags</i>	<i>Celebration on the Solent</i>
	8	Bernard Cheese	<i>The Drum Major</i>	<i>The Drum Major</i>
	9	Geoffrey Clarke	<i>Crown on a Cushion</i>	<i>Coronet</i>
	10	Peter Downing	<i>Celebration Dancers</i>	<i>Jitterbugs</i>
	11	Ronald Glendenning	<i>Guards Bandsmen</i>	<i>Bandsmen</i>
	12	Alistair Grant	<i>Hampton Court</i>	<i>Hampton Court</i>
	13	Alistair Grant	<i>Children Cheering a Procession</i>	<i>Joyful Juniors</i>
	14	Anthony Gross	<i>Hampstead Heath</i>	<i>Hampstead Heath</i>
	15	Barbara Jones	<i>Coronation Coach</i>	<i>Coronation Coach</i>
	16	Edwin La Dell	<i>Band in the City</i>	<i>Bandsmen in the City</i>
	17	Edwin La Dell	<i>Whitehall</i>	<i>Horse Guards Parade</i>
	18	John Minton	<i>Horse Guards in their dressing rooms at Whitehall</i>	<i>Horse Guards in their dressing rooms at Whitehall</i>

	19	Charles Mozley	<i>Buckingham Palace Guard</i>	<i>Buckingham Palace Guard</i>
	20	Jane Pickles	-	<i>Royal Barge</i>
	21	John Piper	<i>Royal Residence</i>	<i>Royal Residence</i>
	22	Richard Platt	<i>Costers</i>	<i>Costers</i>
	23	Jenny Tempest Radford	<i>Crown and Sceptre</i>	<i>Crown and Sceptre</i>
	24	Ceri Richards	<i>East End Celebration: Costers Dancing</i>	<i>East End Celebration: Costers Dancing</i>
	25	Leonard Rosoman	<i>Two Pipers in the Sunlight</i>	<i>Two Pipers in the Sunlight</i>
	26	Michael Rothenstein	<i>Night Illuminations</i>	<i>Fireworks</i>
	27	Kenneth Rowntree	<i>Country Celebrations</i>	<i>Country Celebrations</i>
	28	William Scott	<i>Busbies</i>	<i>Busby</i>
	29	James Sellars	<i>Armour at the Tower of London</i>	<i>Armour at the Tower of London</i>
	30	Ruskin Spear	<i>Saloon Bar</i>	<i>Public Bar</i>
	31	Humphrey Spender	<i>Westminster Abbey</i>	<i>Westminster Abbey</i>
	32	Julian Trevelyan	<i>The Mall</i>	<i>The Mall</i>
	33	Fred Uhlman	<i>The Tower of London</i>	<i>The Tower of London</i>
Uncertain	34	Keith Vaughan	<i>Bandsmen</i>	<i>Bandsmen</i>
Unlikely	35	John Skeaping	<i>Dog-racing</i>	<i>Greyhound</i>
	36	Kenneth Arnup	<i>Houses of Parliament</i>	<i>Houses of Parliament</i>
Not included		Geoffrey Clarke	<i>Guardsmen</i>	
		Geoffrey Clarke	<i>Crown</i>	
		Robert Colquhoun	<i>Welsh Guards' Goat Mascot and Keeper</i>	
		Robin Darwin	<i>London Statues</i>	
		Barnett Freedman	<i>Ceremonial still life</i>	
		Laurence Scarfe	<i>Heraldry</i>	

Two publications list contents for the *Coronation Lithographs*: Robin Garton's *British*

*Printmakers 1851 – 1951* and Tessa Sidey's 'The Devenish Brothers'.<sup>838</sup> These listings are

identical and show the series comprising forty lithographs by thirty-six artists. Sidey cites as

<sup>838</sup> Garton (ed.), *British Printmakers*, Appendix XII, 323; Sidey 'The Devenish Brothers', Appendix, 380. Sidey's dependence on the inaccurate Redfern Gallery catalogue, outlined below, also leads her to illustrate the series through works by La Dell and Rothenstein which were not, in fact, included in it.



her source the catalogue for the initial exhibition held at the Redfern Gallery in spring 1953 (see the column headed 'Redfern Gallery' in the table above); Garton gives no source, but presumably it is the same.<sup>839</sup> However, other archival evidence indicates a different composition. A typescript list inserted into the catalogue for the RCA's *Coronation Year Exhibition* at the Victoria and Albert Museum in July 1953 (now held in the National Art Library) shares its content with a second typescript in the Tate Gallery Archive (TGA 7043.2.26.176), produced when the lithographs were sold through the Artists International Association (AIA) Gallery in the same year. The AIA-RCA list (see the column headed 'AIA-RCA' in the table above) comprises thirty-six prints by thirty-four artists. In a comparison with the Redfern catalogue set, it adds two works and omits six (hence a net reduction of four) while a further twelve have different titles. (The differences in title are largely variants; in only one case, the work by Michael Rothenstein, is a different print suggested and this is discussed below).

In addition to their mutual confirmation, several factors suggest the accuracy of the AIA-RCA listing over the Redfern catalogue. First, where titles vary the former tend to be more accurate (e.g. the singular *Busby* for the print by William Scott) or more considered (e.g. *Celebration on the Solent*, against *Yacht with Coronation Flags*, for that by Rodney Burn). Second, the six works shown only in the Redfern catalogue are absent from recent sales records and from public collections, despite being by relatively prominent artists, suggesting that they were, in fact, never proofed or editioned. Third, two further contemporaneous

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<sup>839</sup> *Paintings by Ceri Richards & Alphonse Quizet : Prints by Vlaminck : R.C.A. Coronation Lithographs*, exhibition catalogue, Redfern Gallery, 28 April-23 May 1953.

lists of subsets of the series also omit these six prints.<sup>840</sup> Finally, and most persuasively, there is a close match between the AIA-RCA contents and the current holding of work from the series in the RCA Print Archive. The latter comprises thirty-five impressions, all but one of which are works on the AIA-RCA listing. Moreover, the RCA Print Archive includes the two works listed by the AIA-RCA only and excludes all six that are shown in the Redfern catalogue only. (The work in the RCA Print Archive additional to the AIA-RCA list has no title but is by Jane Pickles and related to her *Coronation Lithograph, Royal Barge*; given that it appears in no contemporary listings it does not seem have been included in the final series. All but two of the impressions in the RCA Print Archive were reproduced in the catalogue for the *150/150 Anniversary Exhibition*. Omitted were the unnamed Pickles and, for unknown reasons, Ronald Glendenning's *Bandsmen*. The titles used, however, appeared to have been concocted for that exhibition through a simple description of content – Minton's work, for example, renamed *Preparations* – with the exception of Grant's *Joyful Juniors* where the original title was retained, probably reflecting Grant's memory for the correct title and his involvement in the exhibition, as head of printmaking at the RCA at the time.)<sup>841</sup>

The two prints on the AIA-RCA list (of thirty-six) missing from the RCA Print Archive (of thirty-five, but including the additional Pickles work) are *Greyhound* by John Skeaping and *Houses of Parliament* by Kenneth Arnup (an RCA student). Skeaping produced a lithograph entitled *Greyhound* in 1953, but there is no other trace of Arnup's work. It seems probable that

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<sup>840</sup> These are an RCA memo to the AIA, 30 April 1953 (Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 7043.2.26.192) and a list of 'Objects submitted on approval for purchase' to the Victorian and Albert Museum, 8 July 1953, RCA Print Archive)

<sup>841</sup> *150/150 Anniversary Exhibition: Printmaking from the Royal College of Art*, exhibition catalogue, Barbican, 4<sup>th</sup> June – 19<sup>th</sup> July 1987.

Arnup's print was never produced, while Skeaping's came too late for inclusion in the *Coronation Lithographs* or was dropped due to a lack of thematic relevance. The total number of prints in the series would therefore have been, maximally, thirty-four.

In a further complication, the main text of the *RCA Coronation Year Exhibition* catalogue states that the series comprised just thirty-three works. It is therefore possible that one of those in the RCA Print Archive was proofed but never editioned. A candidate work is Keith Vaughan's *Bandsmen*: given the artist's stature, one might expect his print to have been purchased along with others by the Victoria and Albert Museum and included in the *RCA Coronation Year Exhibition*, but neither was the case; in addition, copies of the print are now rare, a point made by Meyrick and Heuser.<sup>842</sup>

In summary, the Redfern catalogue gives a misleading idea of the content of the *Coronation Lithographs* (with inaccurate inclusions and exclusions). It seems likely to have been prepared in advance of publication, with errors arising as prints were dropped or substituted. The RCA-AIA list is a better basis for determining the prints published within the series, though this may name some prints not produced or not published within the series. It is also clear that the composition of the series was approached with a degree of flexibility by its organisers: no single brochure or exhibition gave a definitive listing of contents.

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<sup>842</sup> Meyrick and Heuser, "...poised on the edge". Meyrick has suggested that the print may not have been editioned (personal correspondence).

### **Michael Rothenstein, *Fireworks* and *Night Illuminations***

On the basis of the Redfern catalogue Sidey lists (and illustrates) Michael Rothenstein's *Night Illuminations* as a part of the series. A lithograph with this name was produced by Rothenstein in 1953 and is also ascribed to the Coronation series in Sidey's catalogue raisonné of his prints (presumably following the Redfern catalogue, though no source is given and Rothenstein himself co-operated in preparation of the catalogue).<sup>843</sup> However, the RCA-AIA list names *Fireworks* as his contribution to the series and it is a copy of this work which is held in the RCA Print Archive. Moreover, Sidey's catalogue raisonné states that *Night Illuminations* was printed in just twelve impressions, which would have been inadequate for the Coronation series.<sup>844</sup> It thus seems highly likely that *Fireworks*, which was also a suitably celebratory image, was that included in the series.

The existence of these two prints from 1953 illustrates how Rothenstein was experimenting with a number of images all loosely based on fireworks or illuminated decorations at the time (the etching and aquatint *Catherine Wheels* held by Tate is another example).<sup>845</sup> It seems that one work was substituted for another within the *Coronation Lithographs* series, close to its launch and after the Redfern catalogue had gone for publication, either because it was felt to be more appropriate or simply because an edition was ready.

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<sup>843</sup> Tessa Sidey, *The Prints of Michael Rothenstein* Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993, cat. no. 10.

<sup>844</sup> A complicating factor is that Sidey, *The Prints of Michael Rothenstein*, shows two versions of *Fireworks* (cat. nos 8 and 8a); the latter is the version held by the RCA print archive but, according to Sidey, this too was printed as just twelve impressions (no edition size is given for cat. no. 8).

<sup>845</sup> Michael Rothenstein, *Catherine Wheels*, P77172.

### **Geoffrey Clarke, *Coronet, Crown and Guardsmen***

Rothenstein's case does not seem to have been an isolated one. The Redfern Catalogue lists three prints by Geoffrey Clarke, *Crown on a Cushion, Crown and Guardsmen*, but in the end only one, entitled *Coronet* in the RCA-AIA list, was included in the series. However, both other prints were published (though the latter is of a single guardsman) and *Crown* was included in a display of 'Recent Artists' Lithographs' at the British Pavilion of the Venice Biennale in 1954 (an impression dated November 1953 is held by the British Council which organised the British presence in Venice and hence is likely to be the one shown there).<sup>846</sup> Like Rothenstein, therefore, Clarke seems to have been working on a group of prints on a common theme, with one becoming part of the *Coronation Lithographs* series either by selection or because it was the only work completed on time (the latter seeming likely given the dating of the British Council's *Crown*).

### **Ceri Richards, *East End Celebration: Costers Dancing***

The title of Ceri Richards' *East End Celebration: Costers Dancing* is uncontested between the sources discussed and an impression was purchased by the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1953.<sup>847</sup> However, Roberto Sanesi's *catalogue raisonné* of Ceri Richards' graphic work illustrates the image with the title *Costers Dancing* and states that it was printed by the RCA in an unlimited edition for the Festival of Britain in 1951, with no mention made of the Coronation series.<sup>848</sup> Moreover, the work illustrated by Sanesi is visibly dated to 1951.

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<sup>846</sup> *Exhibition of works by Nicholson, Bacon, Freud*, exhibition catalogue, unpaginated. British Council accession no. P262.

<sup>847</sup> Victoria and Albert Museum, CIRC. 323-1953.

<sup>848</sup> Sanesi, *The graphic works of Ceri Richards*, cat. no. 21. Sanesi's entry has been repeated elsewhere: Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 223; *Out of Print*, plate 30; Gilmour, 'Curiosity, trepidation,

No mention of a Festival of Britain print is made in archival sources related to that event. Further, the idea of an unlimited edition in 1951 appears implausible given that the work was, undoubtedly, published in a limited edition two years later. It would also be unusual for an unlimited edition to be signed and dated, as Sanesi's example is. Examination of Sanesi's illustration shows it to be, in fact, a different state to other extant impressions of the print, including those in the RCA Print Archive, the Victoria and Albert Museum and one held by the British Council, all of which are identical.<sup>849</sup> The figure on the right is more heavily inked in black, as is the front left foreground, and there is less green in the principal woman's costume. Further, the British Council's print is signed and dated to 1952 (which has led to the unlikely suggestion, presumably to retain consistency with Sanesi, that it is a later impression of an unlimited run from 1951).<sup>850</sup> The most likely explanation seems to be that, for the *Coronation Lithographs*, Richards and the RCA print studio editioned an existing image which had previously been produced only as a proof (in 1951) and it is this proof that is illustrated by Sanesi. The idea of an unlimited edition published for the Festival of Britain is, simply, a confusion. Richards was also experimenting with other images of dancing costermongers over this period: Sanesi illustrates three further approaches to the theme in prints from 1952.

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exasperation . . . salvation', 28-37, 29. Mel Gooding omits the work from his list of Richards' editioned prints (*Ceri Richards Graphics*, Cardiff, 1979, 30).

<sup>849</sup> British Council accession no., P679.

<sup>850</sup> *Out of Print*, plate 30. The Victoria and Albert Museum copy has a label on the reverse giving a date of 1953, but it is not clear if this relates to its making or accession.

**Production**

The confusions which have arisen over the content of the series thus point to something about its production and the way at least some artists were engaging with lithography at this time. For Rothenstein, Clarke and Richards, a single work was not produced in response to a commission for a *Coronation Lithograph*; rather, the artists were actively engaged in experimenting with ideas through lithography (possibly prompted by the series, though for Richards independently of it) and one resulting image, in each case, was incorporated into the published set (for Richards with the addition of a suitably celebratory title).

## APPENDIX SEVEN

### ST GEORGE'S GALLERY PRINTS: NAME AND DATES

#### The name

A number of commercial London galleries have used the name 'St George's Gallery', beginning in the nineteenth century.

- In 1842, a St George's Gallery opened at the prestigious location of St George's Place, Hyde Park Corner. This housed a large collection of Chinese objects amassed by Nathan Dunn, and allowed public entry for a fee. After Dunn's death in 1844 the gallery hosted a combination of modern art shows (giving a number of major Pre-Raphaelite works their first public display) and colonial or orientalist exhibitions. It closed in 1855.<sup>851</sup>
- From 1895 (at the latest) to 1898 (or later) the dealership Burrington and Boss operated from a St George's Gallery at 14 Grafton Street in Mayfair.<sup>852</sup>

These two ventures had no connection with each other or with the third institution to use the name. In contrast, from this third point on there was a thread of continuity between organisations, though a continuity going little deeper than inheritance of the name. In particular (and as is clear from the description below), Erskine's post-war St George's Gallery Prints had only a tenuous connection to the St George's Gallery which had promoted wood engravings and other prints during the bull market of the 1920s.

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<sup>851</sup> See 'Knightsbridge South Side: East of Sloane Street, Hyde Park Corner to Wilton Place', John Greenacombe (ed.), *Survey of London: Volume 45, Knightsbridge*, London: London County Council, 2000, 21-28 (British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol45/>, accessed 23 July 2019).

<sup>852</sup> See Pamela Fletcher and David Israel, *London Gallery Project*, 2007; Revised September 2012. <http://learn.bowdoin.edu/fletcher/london-gallery/>, accessed 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2019.



- From 1922 (at the latest) a St George's Gallery was at 32A St George Street, again in Mayfair.<sup>853</sup> Under Arthur Howell, the gallery had a high profile (for example exhibiting both Georges Rouault and Frances Hodgkin in 1930) and a close association with the wood engraving revival.<sup>854</sup> It hosted the Society of Wood Engravers' Annual Exhibition four times from the mid-1920s (with that organisation splitting in 1925 when a move to the Redfern Gallery was proposed).<sup>855</sup> There were also displays of works in other traditional print media (including an 'Exhibition of prints by members of the Society of Print-Makers' in 1924 and a show of 'Modern English Engraver-Etchers' in 1927).
- Sometime between 1943 and 1945, Howell's sold the gallery name to Otto Brill, a Jewish refugee from Vienna who had previously owned a considerable private art collection.<sup>856</sup> Brill opened new premises at 81 Grovesnor Street and installed as their manager Lea Bondi Jaray, a fellow exile and a former Viennese gallerist, who placed a new emphasis on European Expressionism.<sup>857</sup> In the mid-term, Brill's gallery proved financially unsustainable and it folded in 1950.

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<sup>853</sup> From 1947 this was the location of the Hanover Gallery, see Gill Hedley, 'Three female gallerists who changed the course of British art', *RA Magazine*, Autumn 2016, <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/article/movers-and-shakers-female-gallerists-british-art>, accessed 17<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

<sup>854</sup> See the holding of St George's Gallery exhibition catalogues at the National Art Library and at Tate Library.

<sup>855</sup> Martin Hopkinson, 'Ethelbert White', *Print Quarterly*, 21:1, March 2004, 66.

<sup>856</sup> 'Agatha Sadler, bookseller – obituary', the *Daily Telegraph*, 29<sup>th</sup> January 2016, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/12127601/Agatha-Sadler-bookseller-obituary.html>, accessed 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020; Rosalind Delmar, 'Agatha Sadler obituary', the *Guardian*, 14<sup>th</sup> January 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jan/14/agatha-sadler>, accessed 17<sup>th</sup> September 2020. The former puts the gallery's opening to 1944, the later to 1945, while Cherith Summers, *Brave New Visions: the emigres who transformed the British art world*, Sotheby's St George Street Galleries, July – August 2019, 28, states 1943; adverts for the gallery (in Grovesnor Street) appeared in the *Times* and the *Times Literary Supplement* between 1944 and 1950.

<sup>857</sup> Summers, *Brave New Visions*, 28; that Jaray was an employee (not partner) of Brill is stated in an email from Joseph Rykwert to Gill Hedley, 8 December 2012, kindly supplied to me by the latter. The gallery also showed contemporary British artists including Ceri Richards, Eileen Agar and John Craxton.

- The St George's Gallery name, however, was appropriated by his daughter, Agatha Sadler, for her own art bookshop, which started in Kensington before moving to the Piccadilly Arcade and then Cork Street.<sup>858</sup>

Sadler initially shared the Cork Street premises with Erskine (who sold prints from the back of the shop) and with the painting dealership of the artist Basil Jonzen.<sup>859</sup> Jonzen also used the title of the St George's Gallery, and critics did not make a distinction between the print and painting businesses; the *Times*, for example, in 1955, noted (Jonzen's) Joan Eardley exhibition within its brief review of (Erskine's) Picasso show.<sup>860</sup> Jonzen's dealership started strongly, with exhibitions in 1955 including a first solo show for Elizabeth Frink as well as the Eardley; however, by the end of the following year, its activity had faded as Jonzen's alcoholism became established.<sup>861</sup> Erskine was left as Sadler's sole, active co-trader under the St George's Gallery banner.

### The Opening and Closing Dates

The available primary sources offer a contradictory accounts of when St George's Gallery Prints opened.

- Writing in 1973 in *A Decade of Printmaking*, Erskine himself proposed a date of 1954: 'the inaugural exhibition at 7 Cork Street in 1954 contained a heady mixture of blue chip Picasso's, Rouault's, Matisse's and so on' (though he also noted it was three

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<sup>858</sup> 'Agatha Sadler, bookseller – obituary', the *Daily Telegraph*, 29<sup>th</sup> January 2016; email from Joseph Rykwert. In 1964, Sadler moved her bookshop – retaining the name St George's Gallery – to Duke Street.

<sup>859</sup> Lucie-Smith, 'Obituary: Karin Jonzen', the *Independent*, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1998. Jonzen had, co-incidentally, exhibited as an artist at the 'Society of London Painter-Printers' exhibition in 1948.

<sup>860</sup> The *Times*, 28<sup>th</sup> June 1955, 12.

<sup>861</sup> Tate Library contains no catalogues for Jonzen's venture beyond 1956.

years before the gallery hit its stride).<sup>862</sup> An earlier piece in *Art News and Review*, written in 1962 when the gallery was still operating and with Erskine's co-operation, mentioned the same year, though in relation to an intention rather than its delivery: 'It was late in 1954 that Erskine decided to open a gallery in London'.<sup>863</sup> The 1954 date is repeated by later scholars, notably Frances Carey and Antony Griffiths and Alan Powers (the latter citing *Art News and Review* as his source).<sup>864</sup>

- However, in the catalogue to *The Graven Image*, the St George's Gallery Prints retrospective held at the Whitechapel Gallery from April 1959, Bryan Robertson stated with precision that 'the St George's Gallery opened its doors for the first time in November 1955' (a claim later repeated by Tessa Sidey, citing Robertson).<sup>865</sup> Moreover, this date was repeated by Erskine, though several years later, in his foreword Stanley Jones' autobiography: 'In November 1955 I set up St George's Gallery Prints at number 7 Cork Street'.<sup>866</sup> The same year, without a month, was also given by Benedict Anderson in *New Society* in 1967.

The November 1955 date seems to be a clear error, since an exhibition of prints by S.W. Hayter was held by the gallery, at Cork Street, in March 1955 (and the gallery also appears in a map of West End galleries in *Art News and Review* that July).<sup>867</sup> It is plausible that *The Graven Image* catalogue misprinted what should have been November 1954, and Erskine

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<sup>862</sup> Erskine, 'St George's Gallery Prints', 20.

<sup>863</sup> Whittet, 'The Newer London Galleries: The St George's Gallery', the *Studio*, May 1962, 191.

<sup>864</sup> Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 21; Powers, *Art and Print*, 79.

<sup>865</sup> Bryan Robertson, 'Preface and a Profile', 2; Sidey, *Editions Alecto*, 11.

<sup>866</sup> Robert Erskine, 'Foreword', Jones, *Stanley Jones*, 9.

<sup>867</sup> S.W. Hayter — *engravings etchings lithographs*, exhibition catalogue, St George's Gallery Press, 15<sup>th</sup> March – 16<sup>th</sup> April 1955; *Art News and Review*, 9 July 1955 10.

used this as his source in 2010. On the other hand, there are no catalogues for exhibitions prior to March 1955, failing to positively confirm a 1954 launch (indeed there is no catalogue matching the mixed French exhibition described in Erskine's reminiscence from 1973, though this may simply reflect the fact that early shows lacked an associated publication).<sup>868</sup>

On 17 October 1954, Erskine wrote to Merlyn Evans with an inventory of the artist's work held by St George's Gallery Prints, suggesting that it was indeed active in that year.<sup>869</sup>

However, the correspondence address was given here as Markham Street, not Cork Street, possibly indicating that Erskine was not yet operating from the intended premises (though, at the least, this must have been the intention as the location motivated the gallery's name).

In summary, the available evidence seems to licence the following conclusions. First, the St George's Gallery was operating from Cork Street by March 1955 at the latest, and statements that it opened in November 1955 are incorrect. Second, there was operational activity by October 1954, again at the latest; however, it is possible that this was preparatory and in advance of locating to the Cork Street premises. Beyond these two definitive points, Erskine's 1973 statement suggests that it is most likely that the gallery was fully operational from Cork Street in (late) 1954.

There is a similar lack of precision in the available sources about when the gallery closed; though in this case that seems to reflect the reality of activity being wound down over a period. The publication of catalogues suggests a slowing down of exhibition frequency in

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<sup>868</sup> See the holdings of Tate Library and the National Art Library.

<sup>869</sup> Robert Erskine to Merlyn Evans, 17 October 1954 (Tate Gallery Archive, TGA 896/1/1/1).

1961, and that the last exhibition at Cork Street was held in that year (although there were 1962 and 1963 iterations of *The Graven Image*, these were held at the Royal Watercolour Society). In *A Decade of Printmaking*, Erskine describes the gallery as having an eight year run, implying that operations ceased in (late) 1962, though this is contradicted by the final *Graven Image* exhibition in May 1963.<sup>870</sup> In the same volume, Charles Spencer provided an absolute end date of summer 1963 for St George's Gallery Prints as a trading entity: this was the point at which Erskine joined Editions Alecto as a director, bringing with him the remaining St George's Gallery Prints stock as the core of the new venture's activity.<sup>871</sup>

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<sup>870</sup> Erskine, 'St George's Gallery Prints', 20.

<sup>871</sup> Spencer, 'A Decade of Printmaking', 10.

**APPENDIX EIGHT**  
**ST GEORGE'S GALLERY PRINTS: EXHIBITIONS**

The table below lists all St George's Gallery Print exhibitions which have left a trace in the sources cited at its head. Dates are as precise as the available evidence allows and entries are chronological (with those where the month is unknown listed at the end of entries for the relevant year). Where more than one source relates to an exhibition, only one is cited; the trawl of press listings identified relatively few additional shows to the catalogue search, but had significant overlap with it.

A 1962 *Spectator* article stated that the gallery interspersed monthly one-man shows with one or two general exhibitions each summer; the claim for a fresh monthly display was also made by Carey and Griffiths in the introduction to *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*.<sup>872</sup> The listing below shows considerably less shows than this, even in the gallery's most active phase. It is possible that some of these neither had accompanying printed material nor were reviewed; however it seems likely that this listing is near-complete and that there was some hyperbole to the claim of monthly shows (the gallery would be open for the sale of stock at all times).

The research identified five exhibitions in the period St George's Gallery Prints was operating that were organised by Basil Jonzen (see above): in 1955, Anthony Eyton, Elisabeth Frink, Joan Eardley, Philip Hicks, and in 1956, George Lambourn. Two exhibitions related to

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<sup>872</sup> Adrian, 'Pictures for the Poor', 16; Carey and Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking*, 22.

publications by the poet Julian Cooper in 1958 and 1959 seem likely to have been organised by Agatha Sadler's bookshop.

There is one ambiguous case: *Sugai : the Japanese eye in the western world*, 15 Apr – 14 May 1955. This is discussed as a St George's Gallery Prints exhibition in the *Studio* in 1962.<sup>873</sup> However, (i) the catalogue states the exhibition is from St George's Gallery, not St George's Gallery Prints, as was Erskine's practice, as early as 1955, (ii) the works shown were gouaches, through an arrangement with Gallery Craven, Paris, (iii) the exhibition overlapped with St George's Gallery Prints show of S.W. Hayter.

Year	Date	Title	Notes (inc. location if not Cork St.)	Source
1955	15 March-16 April	Hayter : engravings, etchings, lithographs		1
1955	21 June-23 July	Picasso : etchings 1930 1936		1
1955	13 Sept-18 Oct	Japanese actor prints		1
1956	April	Clarke Hutton		5
1956	August	Contemporary British masters 1956		1
1956	August	Ecole de Paris : an exhibition : original prints	Auckland City Art Gallery	3
1956	From 11 Oct	Anthony Gross : 8 etchings [aka Le Boulevé Suite]		1
1957	21 Jan-16 Feb	Swedish graphic art		1
1957	From 17 July	British graphic art 1957		1
1957	From 15 Nov	[Unknown]	Oslo	4

<sup>873</sup> Whittet, 'The Newer London Galleries: The St George's Gallery', the *Studio*, 163:829, May 1962, 191.

1957		French contemporary prints	Auckland City Art Gallery	3
1958	5 Feb-5 March	Merlyn Evans : Vertical Suite In Black		1
1958	8 March-5 Apr	Peter Peri : Pilgrims Progress Suite		1
1958	To 3 May	Gabor Peterdi		5
1958	12 May-7 June	Ernst Fuchs : paintings, drawings, etchings		1
1958	1 July to 30 Aug	Contemporary British printmakers 1958		1
1958	From 25 August	Exhibition of British Prints	Adam House, Edinburgh	7
1958	4 Oct-9 Nov	Highlights of British printmaking. Exhibition of prints from the collections of St. George's Gallery, London, the Library of Congress, and the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts	Dallas Museum of Fine Arts	3
1958	6 Oct	Allin Braund : Sea Suite		1
1958	4-29 Nov	Michael Ayrton : Greek suite		1
1958	2 Dec-3 Jan 1959	Michael Rothenstein : the Sailing Boats suite		1
1958?		Ralston Crawford	Unknown date in Tate Library catalogue; no information in text.	1
1959	From 1 Jan	Ru van Rossem : spirituals and blues suite.		3
1959	2-21 Jan	"Art for All" : Colour Lithos, Etchings, Wood & Linocuts and Silk Screen Prints from the St. George's Gallery	Midland Group of Artists (Nottingham)	1
1959	16 Jan-6 Feb	Contemporary British printmaking Lent by St. George's Gallery, London'	Museum of Fine Arts of Houston	3
1959	28 Apr-30 May	Anthony Harrison : Formentera suite		1
1959	April	Henry Cliffe : the Metamorphoses suite : 6 new colour lithographs		3
1959	April	Ceri Richards, The Hammerklavier Theme		1
1959	Apr-May	The Graven Image	Whitechapel Art Gallery	1
1959	2-22 June	Laxman Pai : The life of the Buddha		1
1959	29 Sept-31 Oct	Julian Trevelyan : the Malta suite		1



1959	3 Nov-28 Nov	Edwin La Dell : the Oxford and Cambridge Eight		1
1959	1 Dec-2 Jan 1960	The polite tournament: contemporary Japanese printmakers		1
1959		Contemporary British printmakers : a loan exhibition from St. George's Gallery, London	Bet ha-nekhot ha-le'umi Betsal'el, Israel	2
1960	9-26 Jan	Engelsk grafik 1960 = British printmakers 1960	Konstsalongen de Unga (Stockholm)	1
1960	February	Cave Paintings from Spain		4
1960	3-31 May	Francis Kelly : aquatints of Portugal		1
1960	2-25 June	Wapping to Windsor : 27 new offset prints by the staff and students of the RCA		1
1960	13-25 June	21 grabadores britanicos contemporaneos	Museo Español de Arte Contemporaneo (Madrid)	1
1960	3 Aug-3 Sept	George Chapman : the Rhondda suite		1
1960	6 Sept-1 Oct	Brian Perrin : North Welsh landscape		1
1960	6-29 Oct	Richard Beer : etchings of Rome		1
1960	1-26 Nov	John Watson : the point-to-point lithographs		1
1960	6 Dec-6 Jan 1961	Grabados britanicos contemporaneos	Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (Barcelona)	1
1960		Stonehenge : eleven new engravings and lithographs		1
1960		Michael Thompson: Stone age paintings from Castellón		2
1961	19 Mar-3 Apr	Brittisk grafik 1961 ('In collaboration with St. George's Gallery, London)	Riksförbundet för bildande konst (Linköping) (Sweden). Also held in Mariestad, 9-16 Apr.; Surahammar, 23-28 Apr.; Valdemarsvik, 7-14 May; and Hudisvall, 27 May	1
1961	May	The Graven Image	RWS	6
1961	May	Shiko Munakata: a retrospective exhibition of woodcuts	RWS (held alongside 'The graven image', see source 6)	1

1961	9 Dec-6 Jan 1962	Exhibition of Recent British Graphic Art, St. Georges Prints, and Christmas Paintings	New Metropole Arts Centre (Folkestone)	1
1961		Douglas Mazonowicz: Lascaux : six upper palaeolithic paintings		3
1961		Anthony Gross: Charivari Suite		6
1962	1-26 May	The Graven Image	RWS (There was a contemporary suggestion that the <i>Graven Image</i> exhibitions were followed by a regional tour, see source 6).	1
1963	6-28 May	The Graven Image	RWS. This catalogue is reported missing by Tate Library.	1
1963		The polite tournament	Relation to 59/60 exhib?	1
1964?		40 original prints by British artists : etchings, lithographs, woodcuts, etc. from the St. George's Gallery, London	Hong Kong. City Museum & Art Gallery.	2

Sources (note newspaper featured within the digital archive 'Gale Primary Resources' were also searched but produced no additional results):

- 1 A comprehensive listing of all returns from Tate Library Catalogue using the search term St George's Gallery (no quotation marks). All pre-1954 returns ignored.
- 2 All relevant returns from the National Art Library catalogue using the search term St George's Gallery (no quotation marks). All pre-1954 returns ignored.
- 3 All relevant returns from Worldcat using the search term St George's Gallery (no quotation marks). All pre-1954 returns ignored.
- 4 the *Times Digital Archive* (using the search terms 'St George's Gallery Prints', 'St George's Gallery' and 'Robert Erskine', with quotation marks).
- 5 *Burlington Magazine* (via JSTORE using the search terms 'St George's Gallery Prints', 'St George's Gallery' and 'Robert Erskine', with quotation marks)
- 6 G.S. Whittet, *The Newer London Galleries: The St George's Gallery, the Studio, May 1962*, 163:829, 190-93, 192-93.

- 7 'Contemporary Prints on Show at Edinburgh', the *Financial Times*, 20<sup>th</sup> August 1958, 13.

**'THE POOR MAN'S PICTURE GALLERY':  
AN ENQUIRY INTO ARTISTS' PRINTMAKING AND PRINT IMAGES  
IN THE CULTURAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF POST-WAR BRITAIN, 1945-60**

MICHAEL CLEGG

TWO VOLUMES: VOLUME TWO

A thesis submitted to the UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM for the degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Art History, Curating and Visual Studies  
School of Languages, Cultures, Art History and Music  
College of Arts and Law  
University of Birmingham  
April 2021

## ILLUSTRATIONS



Figure 1. Claude Rogers, *The Shot Tower from Somerset House* (also known as *A View of the Shot Tower from Somerset House*), exhibited 1948, Victoria and Albert Museum. Lithograph, 24 x 26 cm.



Figure 2. The Shot Tower and the Lion Brewery, 1945-50.



Figure 3. The Shot Tower at the Festival of Britain, 1951.



Figure 4. Michael Rothenstein, *Cockerel Turning Round*, exhibited 1956 with the New Editions Group, Fry Art Gallery, Saffron Walden. Linocut, 39 x 58 cm.



Figure 5. Edward Bawden, *Braintree Market*, published 1937 in Contemporary Lithographs Ltd's first series, Fry Art Gallery, Saffron Walden. Lithography, 51 x 76 cm.



Figure 6. Jankel Adler, *Portrait of a Girl*, exhibited 1948, Christchurch Art Gallery/ Te Puna O Waiwhetū. Lithograph, 51 x 33 cm.



Figure 7. Eileen Mayo, *Cat in the Sun*, exhibited 1948, Victoria and Albert Museum. Lithograph, 32 x 27 cm.





Figure 8. Hans Feibusch, *The Entombment*, 1944, Museum of New Zealand/ Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington. Lithograph, 48 x 24 cm.



Figure 9. Edwin La Dell, *Tom Trying to Sit for a Picture*, 1948, National Gallery of Victoria. Lithograph, dimensions unknown.



Figure 10. Victor Pasmore, *Abstract*, 1948, British Council. Lithograph, 69 x 49 cm.



Figure 11. Matthew Smith, *Still Life I* (see notes to the main text for title and identification), exhibited 1948, British Council. Lithograph, 43 x 34 cm.



Figure 12. Eileen Agar, *Shrimps at Sea*, exhibited 1948, Christchurch Art Gallery/ Te Puna O Waiwhetū. Lithograph, 34 x 45 cm.



Figure 13. Eileen Lucas, *Marine Square, Kemp Town*, exhibited 1948, Christchurch Art Gallery/ Te Puna O Waiwhetū. Lithograph, 34 x 46 cm.



Figure 14. Bryan Wynter, *Landscape with Xerophyte*, exhibited 1948, Auckland Art Gallery/ Toi O Tāmaki. Lithograph, 33 x 39 cm.

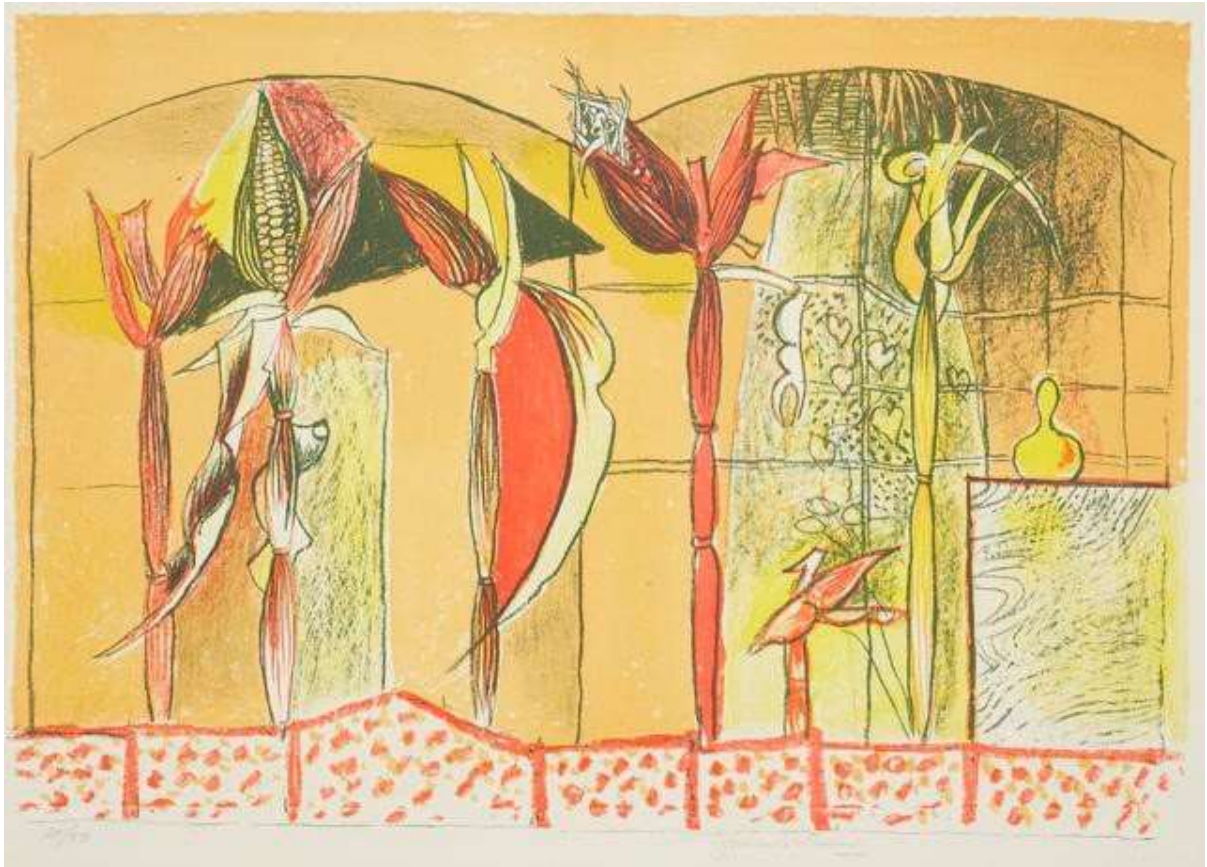


Figure 15. Graham Sutherland, *Maize*, exhibited 1948, British Council.  
Lithograph, 38 x 55 cm.

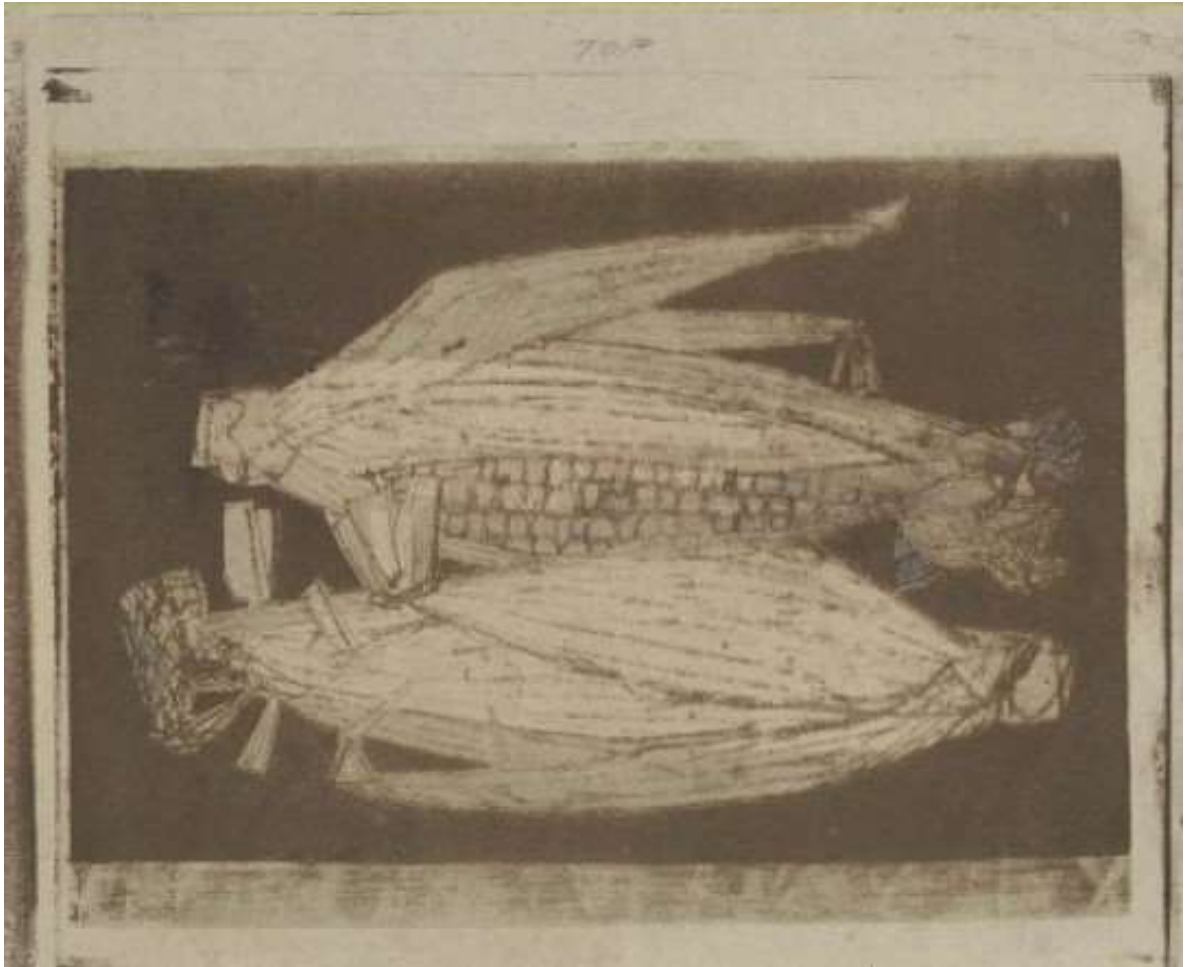


Figure 16. Prunella Clough, *Sweetcorn*, exhibited 1948, British Council.  
Lithograph, 18 x 27 cm.



Figure 17. Helen Binyon, *The Flower Show*, published 1940 in the *AIA Everyman Prints* series, British Museum. Lithograph, 18 x 27 cm.

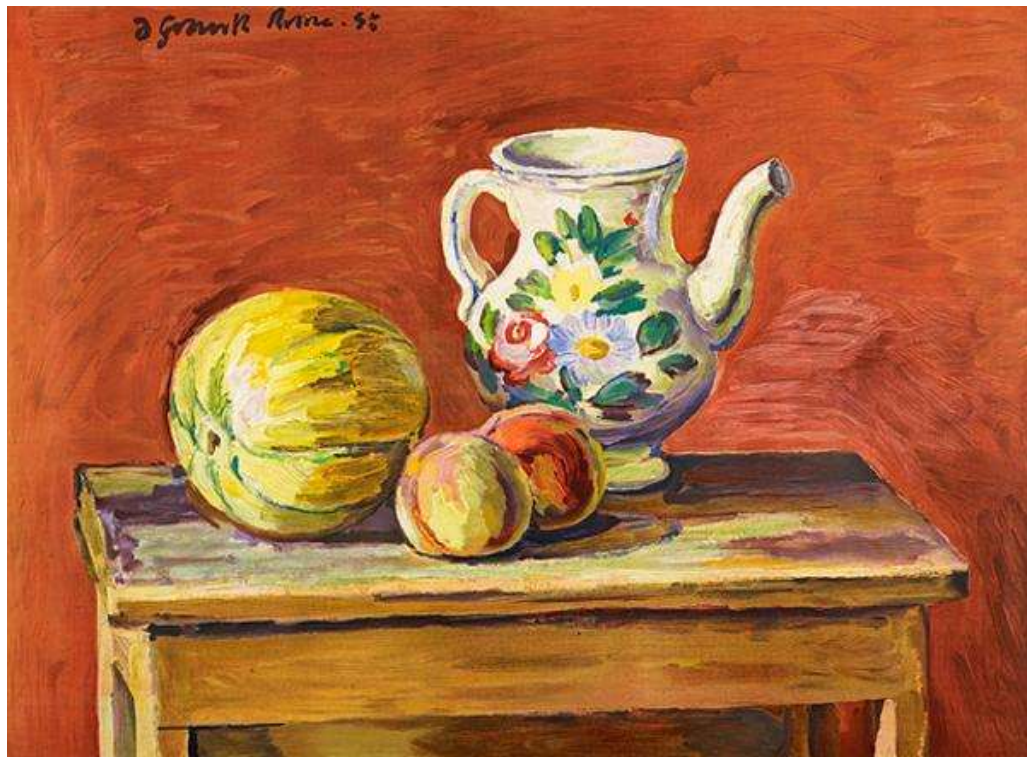


Figure 18. Duncan Grant, *Still Life*, image 1945, published 1947, Victoria and Albert Museum. Lithograph 75 x 99 cm.





Figure 19. Ruskin Spear, *Billiards Saloon*, published 1947, Victoria and Albert Museum.  
Lithograph, 75 x 99 cm.



Figure 20. William Scott, *The Bird Cage*, published 1947, Victoria and Albert Museum.  
Lithograph, 75 x 99 cm.



Figure 21. Edwin La Dell, *Hastings*, published 1947, Victoria and Albert Museum. Lithograph, 75 x 99 cm.



Figure 22. Anthony Gross *Herne Bay Pier*, published 1947, Victoria and Albert Museum. Lithograph, 75 x 99 cm.



Figure 23. Tackleway, Hastings, Google Street View, July 2018.



Figure 24. Barnett Freedman, *People*, published 1947, Victoria and Albert Museum. Lithograph, 75 x 99 cm.



Figure 25. Mary Kessell, *The Flight into Egypt*, 1947, Victoria and Albert Museum.  
Lithograph, 75 x 99 cm.



Figure 26. Michael Rothenstein, *Pigeon*, exhibited 1956 with the New Editions Group, Fry Art Gallery, Saffron Walden. Linocut, 47 x 67 cm.



Figure 27. John Aldridge, *Great Bardfield*, 1950, Fry Art Gallery, Saffron Walden. Lithograph, 46 x 72 cm.



Figure 28. Julian Trevelyan, *Regatta* (School Prints edition), published 1951, Tate. Lithograph, 49 x 76 cm.



Figure 29. Edwin La Dell, *M.C.C. at Lords* (School Prints edition), published 1951, private collection. Lithograph, 46 x 73 cm.





Figure 30. Sheila Robinson, *Fun Fair*, published 1951, Arts Council Collection. Lithograph, 48 x 73 cm.



Figure 31. James Boswell, *The Winning Side* (School Prints Edition), published 1951, Tate Gallery Archive. Lithograph, 50 x 76 cm.



Figure 32. James Sellars, *Sheffield Steel*, published 1951, Tate Gallery Archive.  
Lithograph, 50 x 77 cm.



Figure 33. Lynton Lamb, *The Country House* (School Prints edition), published 1951, Tate Archive. Lithograph, 46 X 72 cm.



Figure 34. Lynton Lamb, *The Shire Hall*, published 1951, Victoria and Albert Museum. Lithograph, 51 x 74 cm.



Figure 35. Fred Uhlman, *North Wales*, published 1951, Tate Archive. Lithograph, 54 x 77 cm.

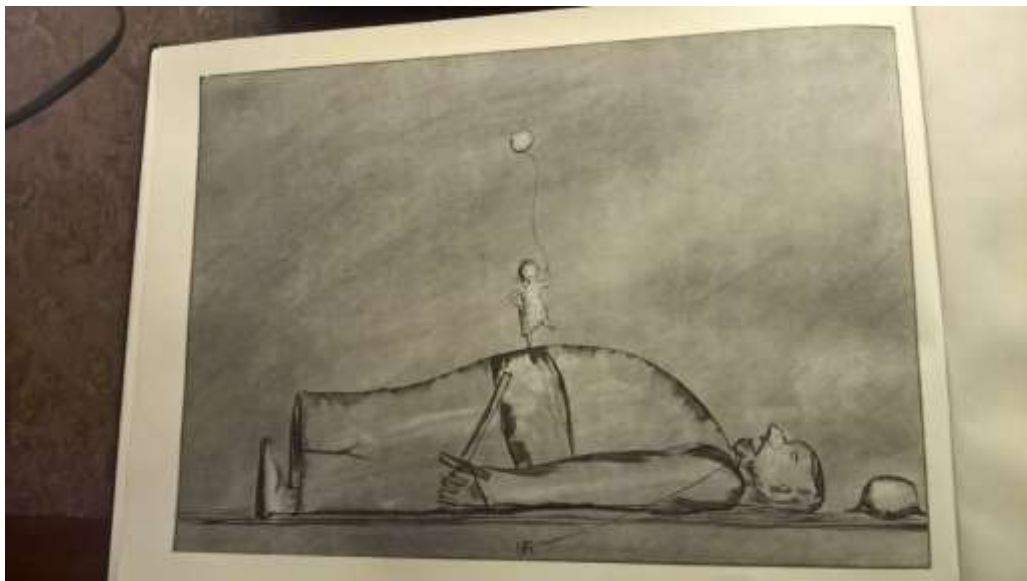


Figure 36. Illustration from Fred Uhlman, introduced by Raymond Mortimer, *Captivity*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1946.

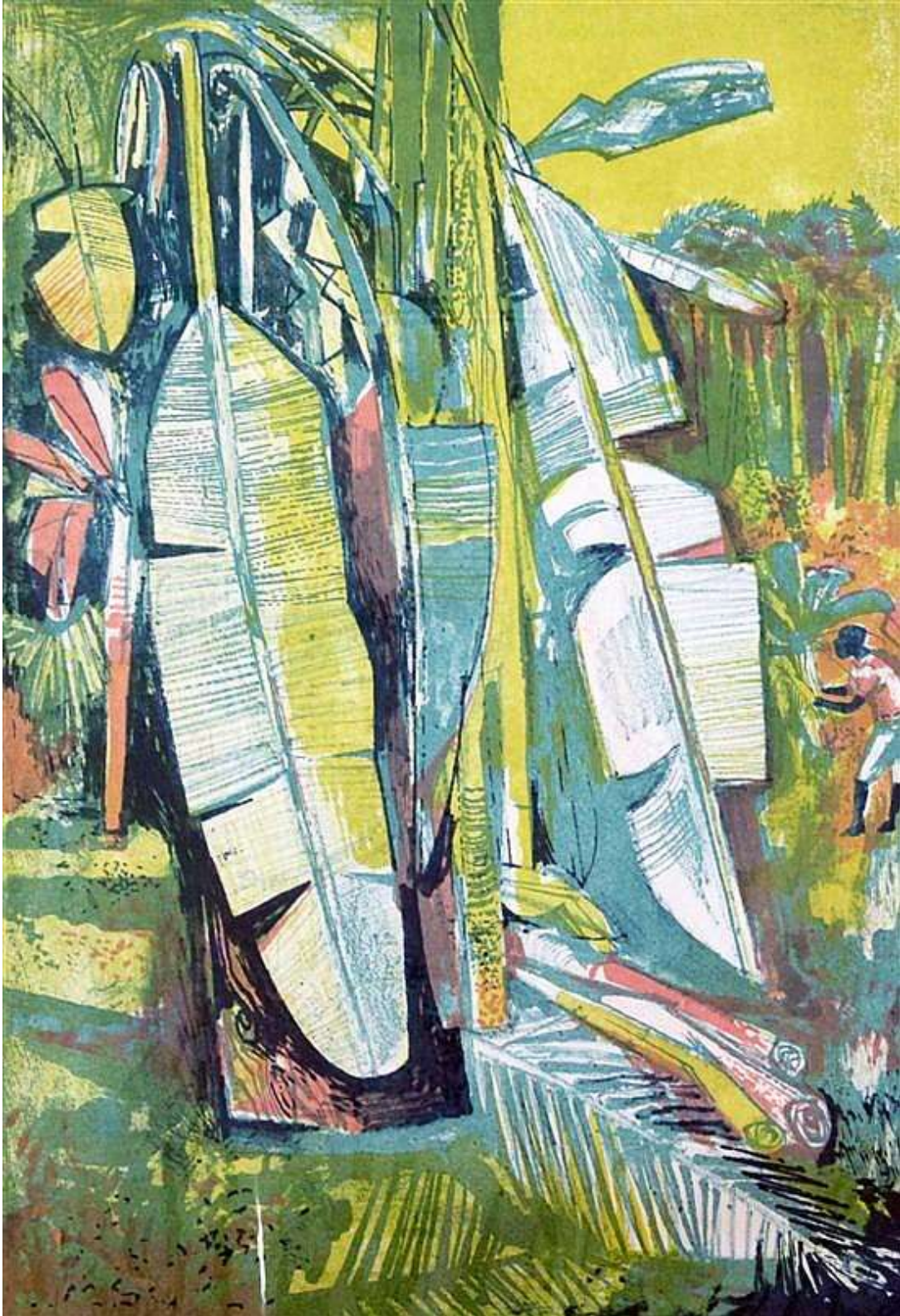


Figure 37. John Minton, *Jamaica* (four colour version), published 1951, private collection.  
Lithograph, 38 x 27 cm.



Figure 38. Laurence Scarfe, *Bird Boy*, published 1951, Tate Archive. Lithograph, 43 x 67 cm.



Figure 39. Keith Vaughan, *Dancers*, published 1951, Arts Council Collection. Lithograph, 72 x 46 cm.



Figure 40. Edwin La Dell, *Horse Guards Parade*, published 1953, RCA Print Archive. Lithograph, 33 x 47 cm.



Figure 41. Edwin La Dell, *Bandsmen in the City*, published 1953, RCA Print Archive. Lithograph, 46 x 33 cm.



Figure 42. Kenneth Rowntree, *Country Celebrations*, published 1953, Fry Art Gallery, Saffron Walden. Lithograph, 31 x 43 cm.





Figure 43. Barbara Jones, *Coronation Coach*, published 1953, RCA Print Archive. Lithograph, 30 x 43 cm.



Figure 44. Barbara Jones, *Fairground*, published 1946, Victoria and Albert Museum. Lithograph, 76 x 50 cm.



Figure 45. Richard Platt, *Costers*, published 1953, RCA Print Archive. Lithograph, dimensions unknown.



Figure 46. Ceri Richards, *East End Celebrations: Costers Dancing*, published 1953, RCA Print Archive. Lithograph, 37 x 51 cm.



Figure 47. Julian Trevelyan, *The Mall*, published 1953, RCA Print Archive.  
Lithograph, 30 x 43 cm.



Figure 48. Stella Marsden, *Horseguards*, published 1951, Tate Gallery Archive.  
Lithograph, 47 x 74 cm.

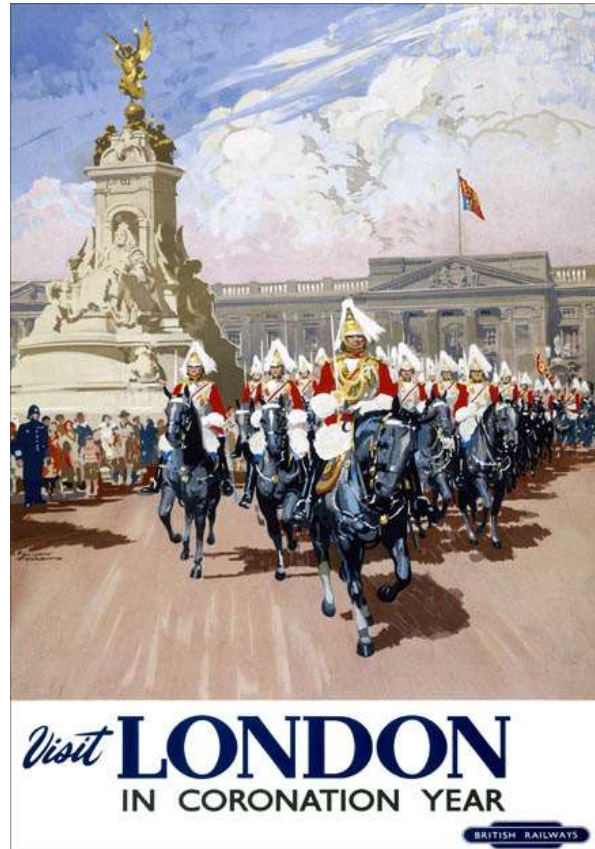


Figure 49. Gordon Nicholl, *Visit London in Coronation Year*, 1953. Lithograph, dimensions unknown.



Figure 50. Charles Mozley, *Coronation London 1953 Fly BEA*, 1953. Lithograph, 72 x 105 cm.



Figure 51. Charles Mozley, *Buckingham Palace Guard*, published 1953, RCA Print Archive. Lithograph, no dimensions available.



Figure 52. Edward Bawden, *Life Guards*, published 1953, Victoria and Albert Museum. Lithograph, 43 x 30 cm.



Figure 53. *Left Review*, May 1937, 234, showing two drawings by Edward Bawden.



Figure 54. Keith Vaughan, *Bandsmen*, printed 1953, RCA Print Archive.  
Lithograph, 50 x 35 cm.



Figure 55. John Minton, *Horse Guards in their dressing rooms at Whitehall*, published 1953, Victoria and Albert Museum. Lithograph, 42 x 30 cm.





Figure 56. William Scott, *Busby*, published 1953, RCA Print Archive. Lithograph 46 x 33 cm.



Figure 57. William Scott, *Orange, Black and White Composition*, 1953, Tate. Oil on canvas, 122 x 122 cm.



Figure 58. Jane Pickles, *Royal Barge*, published 1953, RCA Print Archive. Lithograph, 53 x 42 cm.



Figure 59. Anthony Gross, *Threshing*, published 1956, Government Art Collection. Etching, 47 x 54 cm.



Figure 60. Anthony Harrison, *Boats*, 1954, exhibited at St George's Gallery Prints 1956, Victoria and Albert Museum. Aquatint, 51 x 66 cm.

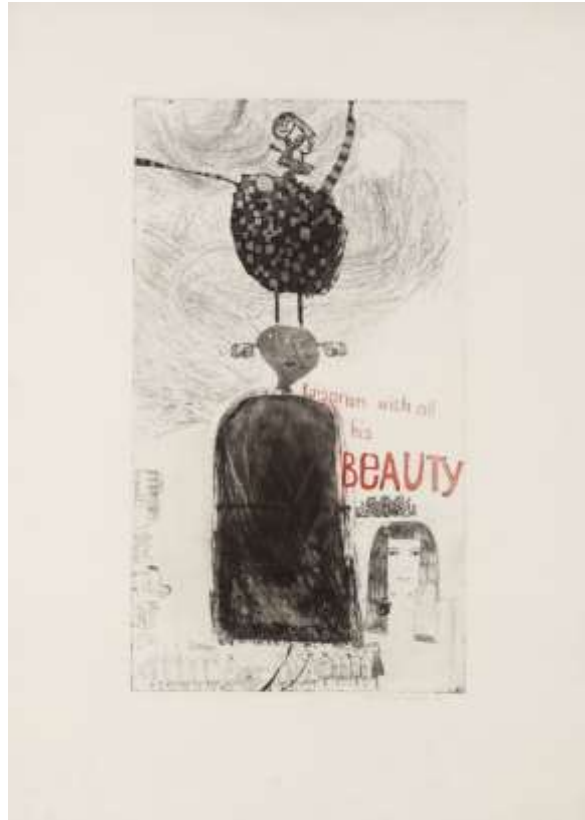


Figure 61. David Hockney, *Kaisarion with All His Beauty*, 1961, Tate. Etching, 49 x 28 cm.



Figure 62. Richard Beer, *Colosseum* (from *Etchings of Rome*), published 1960, Government Art Collection. Etching, 65 x 76 cm.



Figure 63. Mary Fedden, *Chiswick* (from *Wapping to Windsor*), published 1960, Government Art Collection. Lithograph, 52 x 40 cm.



Figure 64. Merlyn Evans, *Helmet Mask* (from *Vertical Suite in Black*), published 1958, Victoria and Albert Museum. Sugar-lift aquatint, 73 x 50 cm.



Figure 65. Merlyn Evans, *Standing Figure* (from *Vertical Suite in Black*), published 1958, Victoria and Albert Museum. Sugar-lift aquatint, 75 x 51 cm.

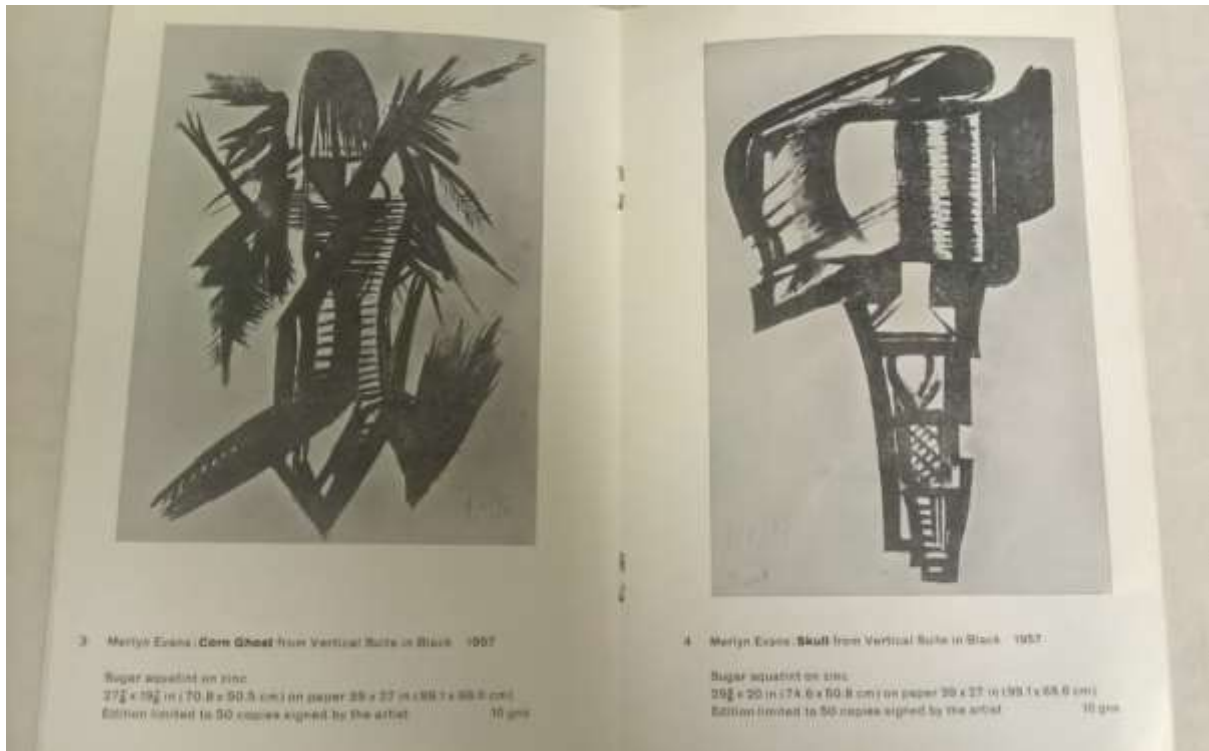


Figure 66. Merlyn Evans, *Corn Ghost* and *Skull* (from *Vertical Suite in Black*), published 1958. Sugar-lift aquatint, 71 x 51 cm and 75 x 51 cm respectively. Illustrated in *Merlyn Evans – Vertical Suite in Black*, exhibition catalogue, St George’s Gallery Prints, 5<sup>th</sup> February – 5<sup>th</sup> March 1958, unpaginated.

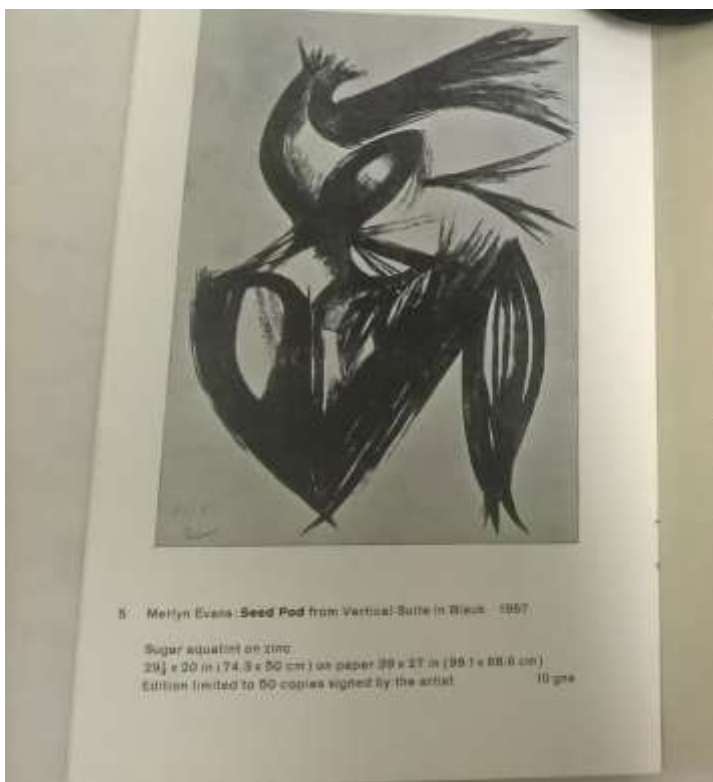


Figure 67. Merlyn Evans, *Seed Pod* (from *Vertical Suite in Black*), published 1958. Sugar-lift aquatint, 74 x 50 cm. Illustrated in *Merlyn Evans – Vertical Suite in Black*, exhibition catalogue, St George’s Gallery Prints, 5<sup>th</sup> February – 5<sup>th</sup> March 1958, unpaginated.





Figure 68. Merlyn Evans, *Thunderbird* (from *Vertical Suite in Black*), published 1958, Victoria and Albert Museum. Sugar-lift aquatint, 75 x 51 cm.



Figure 69. Merlyn Evans, *The Conquest of Time*, 1934, Tate. Oil on canvas, 102 x 81 cm.



Figure 70. Merlyn Evans, *The Tragic Group or Victims of Demolition in Finland*, 1939- 40, Newport Museum and Art Gallery. Tempera on board, 76 x 91 cm.



Figure 71. Merlyn Evans, *First Study for The Chess Players*, 1939, Bolton Museum and Art Gallery. Oil on canvas, 151 x 151 cm.



Figure 72. Merlyn Evans, *The Execution*, 1945-46, Imperial War Museum. Oil on canvas, 82 x 119 cm.



Figure 73. Merlyn Evans, *Polynesian Fantasy*, 1938, Leeds Art Gallery. Tempera on board, 20 x 25 cm.



Figure 74. Baga dance mask or Nimba, twentieth century, British Museum (reg no. Af1957,07.1.a-b). Wood and Raffia Palm Leaf, 124 x 35 x 55 cm.



Figure 75. Baga dancer in mask, undated.



Figure 76. Figure of a Kneeling Woman, Dogon, c.1500, Metropolitan Museum, New York. Wood, height 35 cm.



Figure 77. Eduardo Paolozzi, *Wittgenstein in New York*, 1964, Tate. Screenprint, 76 x 54 cm.



Figure 78. Joseph Herman, *Two Miners*, c.1960, Tate. Lithograph, 45 × 68 cm.



Figure 79. Joseph Herman, *Two Miners*, 1960-62, Tate. Lithograph, 48 × 68 cm.

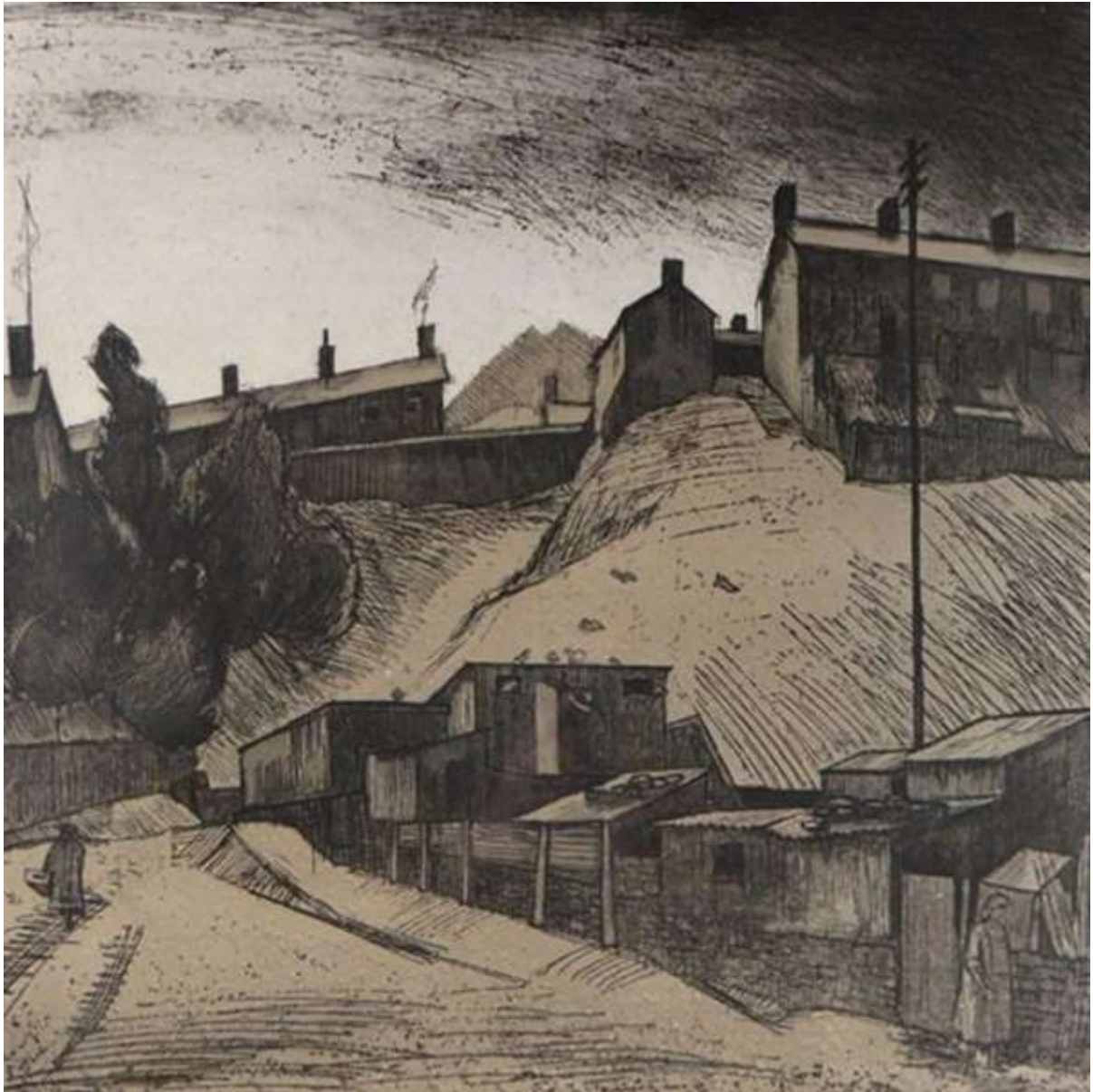


Figure 80. George Chapman, *Pigeon Huts* (from the *Rhondda Suite*), published 1960, Aberystwyth University School of Art Collections. Hard ground etching with aquatint and colour, 55 x 50 cm.





Figure 81. George Chapman, *Old Men at Gossip* (from the *Rhondda Suite*), published 1960. Aberystwyth University School of Art Collections. Hard ground etching with aquatint, 40 x 50 cm. Illustrated in *George Chapman: the Rhondda suite*, exhibition catalogue, St George's Gallery Prints, London, 3<sup>rd</sup> August – 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1960.

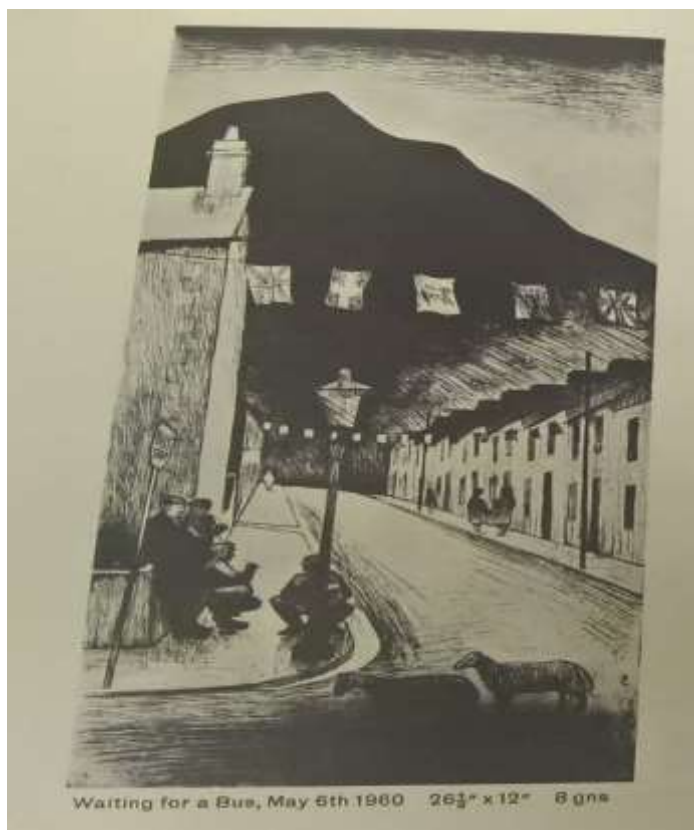


Figure 82. George Chapman, *Waiting for a Bus, May 6<sup>th</sup> 1960* (from the *Rhondda Suite*), published 1960. Aberystwyth University School of Art Collections. Hard ground etching with aquatint, 40 x 50 cm. Illustrated in *George Chapman: the Rhondda suite*, exhibition catalogue, St George's Gallery Prints, London, 3<sup>rd</sup> August – 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1960.

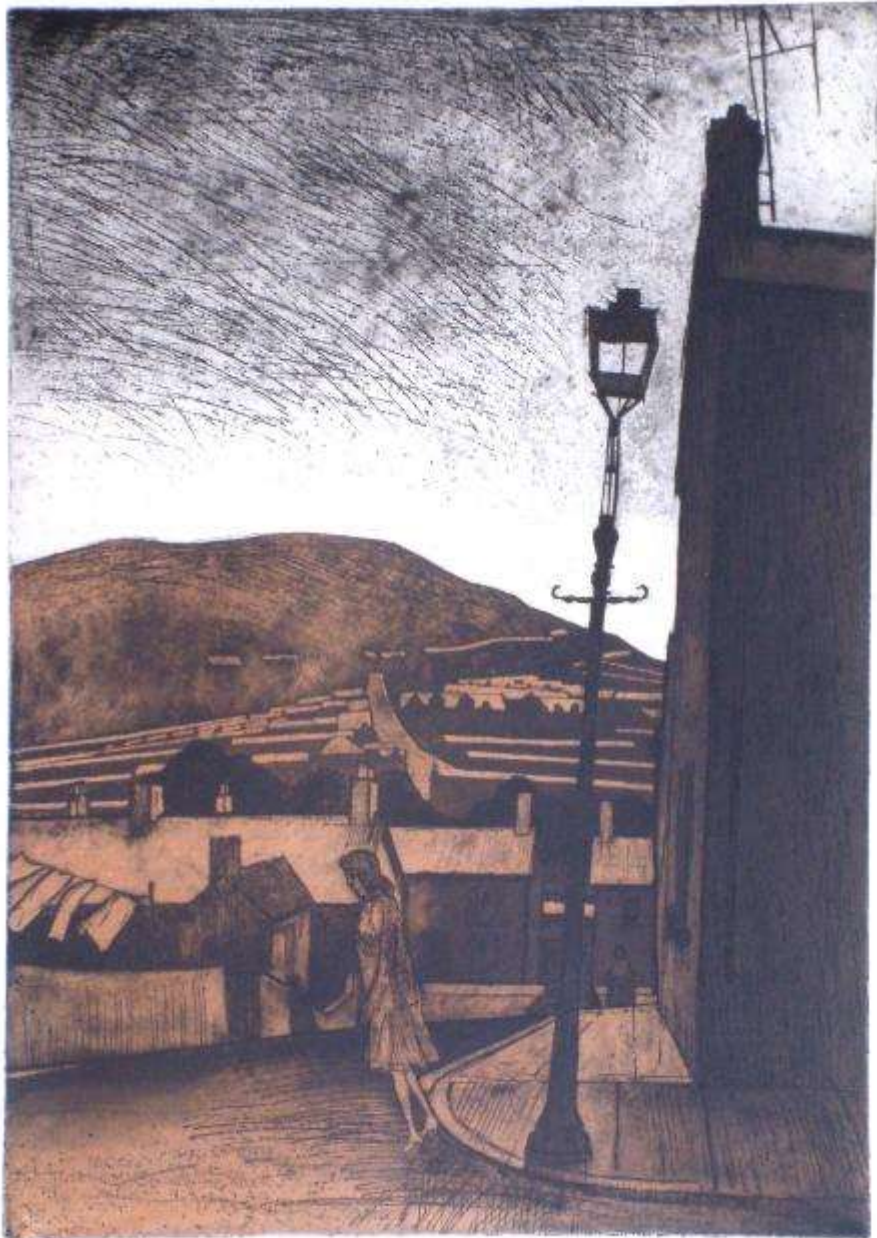


Figure 83. George Chapman, *Across the Valley* (from the *Rhondda Suite*), 1960 (this edition printed by Gareth Jones c. 1987), Aberystwyth University School of Art Collections. Hard ground etching with aquatint and colour, 55 x 40 cm.

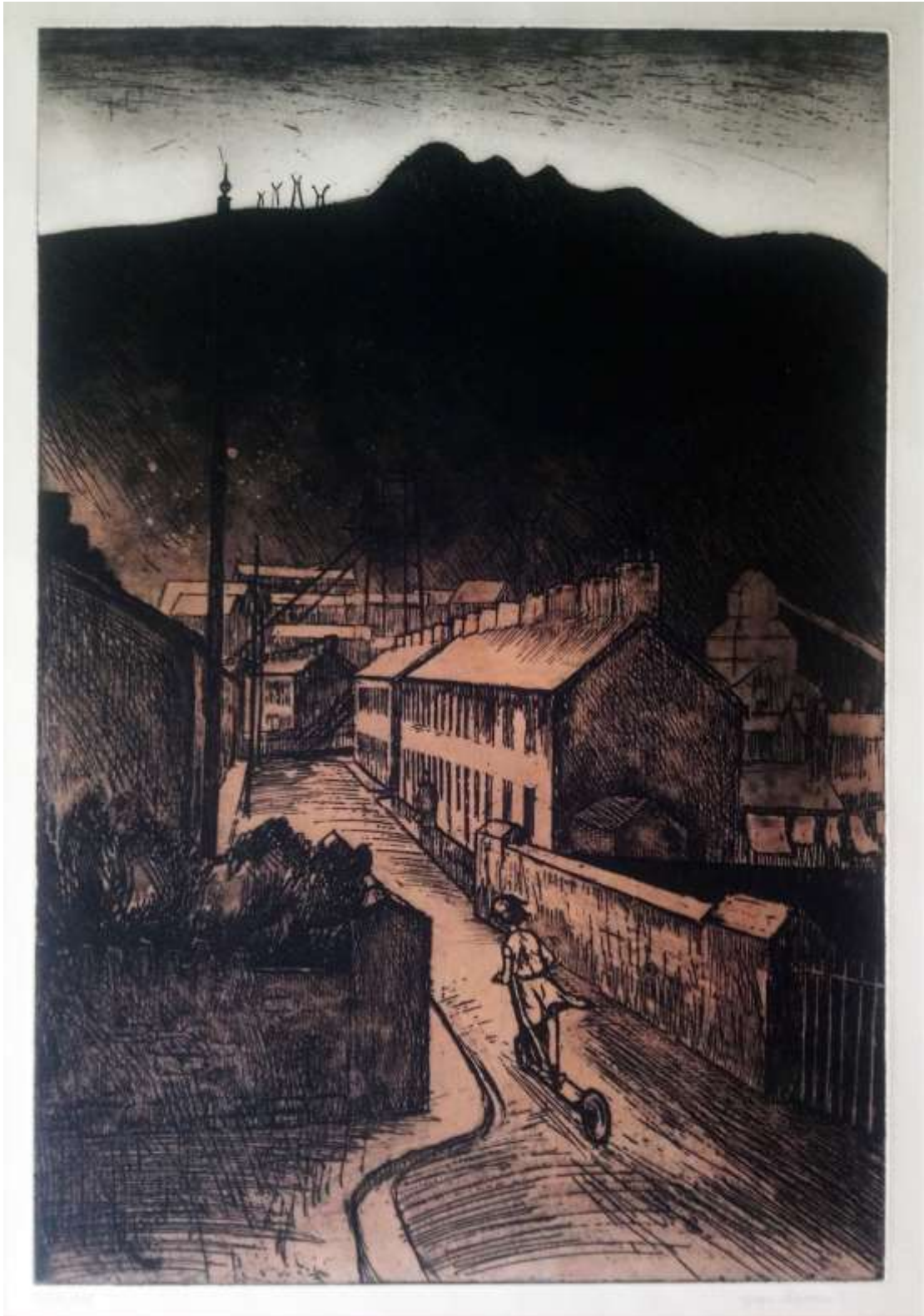


Figure 84. George Chapman, *The Valley Gets Deeper* (from the *Rhondda Suite*), 1960 (this edition printed by Gareth Jones c. 1987), Aberystwyth University School of Art Collections. Hard ground etching with aquatint and colour, 67 X 47 cm.

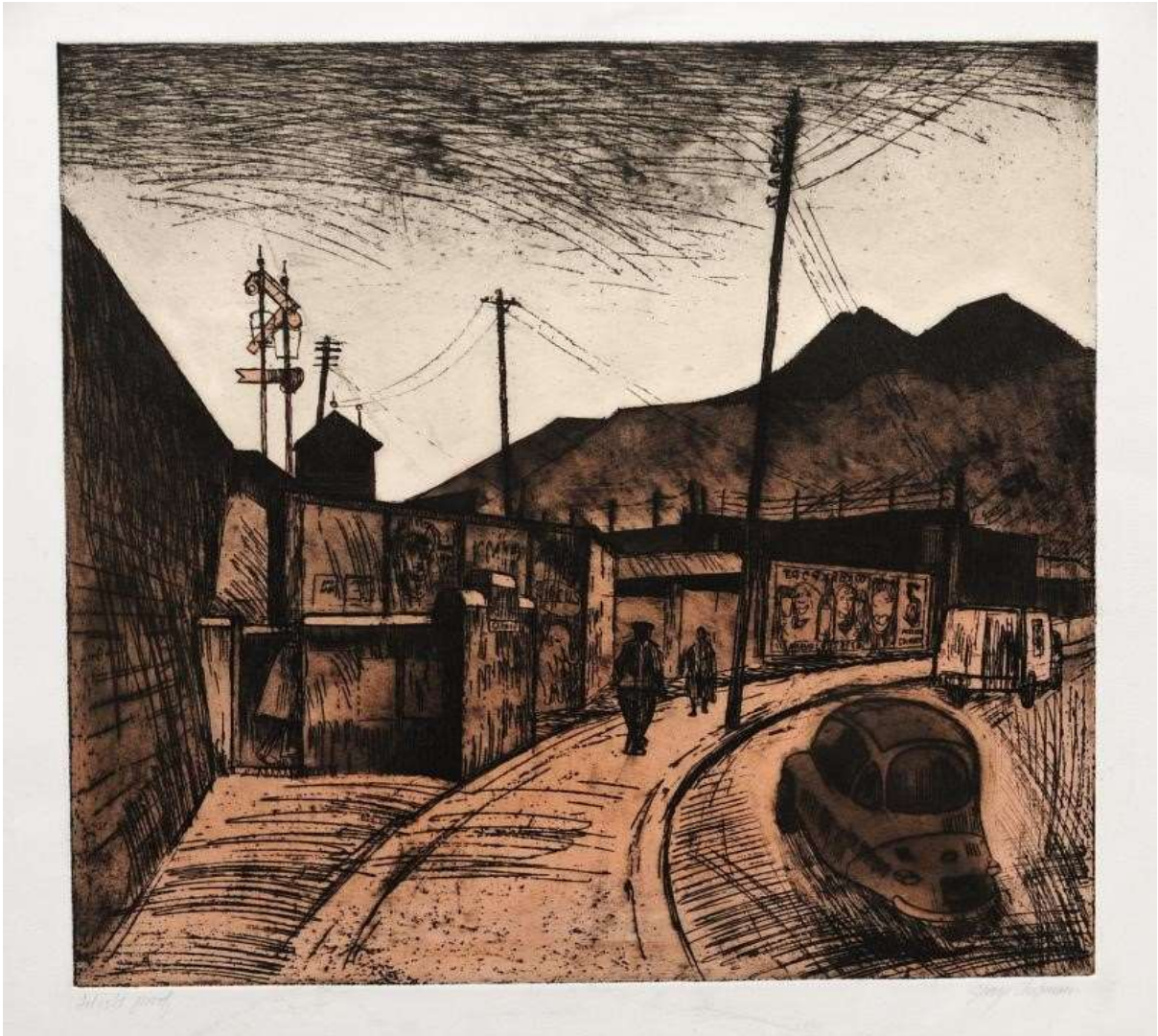


Figure 85. George Chapman, *The First Building*, (from the *Rhondda Suite*), 1960 (this edition printed by Gareth Jones c. 1987), Aberystwyth University School of Art Collections. Hard ground etching with aquatint, 50 x 50 cm.

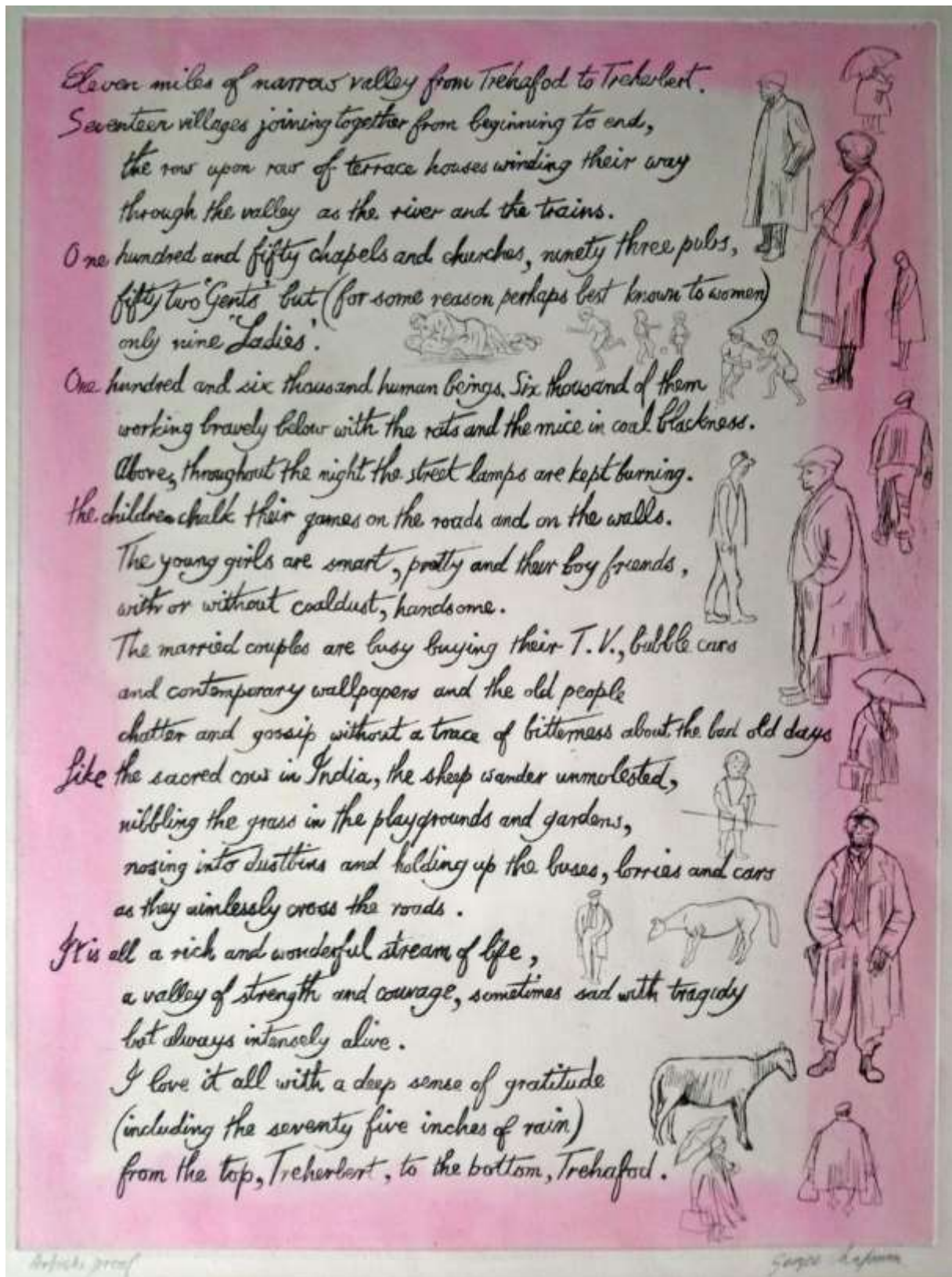


Figure 86. George Chapman, 'Introduction Print', (from the Rhondda Suite), 1960 (this edition printed by Gareth Jones c. 1987), Aberystwyth University School of Art Collections. Hard ground etching with aquatint, 61 x 45 cm.



Figure 87. Joseph Herman, *The Pit Pony*, 1958–9, Tate. Oil on canvas, 112 × 185 cm.



Figure 88. Joseph Herman, *Evening, Ystradgynlais*, 1948, Tate. Oil on canvas, 64 × 85 cm.



Figure 89. Josef Herman, *Miners*, 1951, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery. Oil on board, 132 x 282 cm.



Figure 90. Trojan 200, 1961. (Berthold Werner, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heinkel\\_Kabine#/media/File:Heinkel\\_Trojan\\_153\\_BW\\_2.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heinkel_Kabine#/media/File:Heinkel_Trojan_153_BW_2.jpg)).



Figure 91. Richard Hamilton, *I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas*, 1967, Museum of Modern Art, New York. Screenprint, 56 x 86 cm.